KANNADA WRITERS AND THEIR WORK–10

D.R. BENDRE

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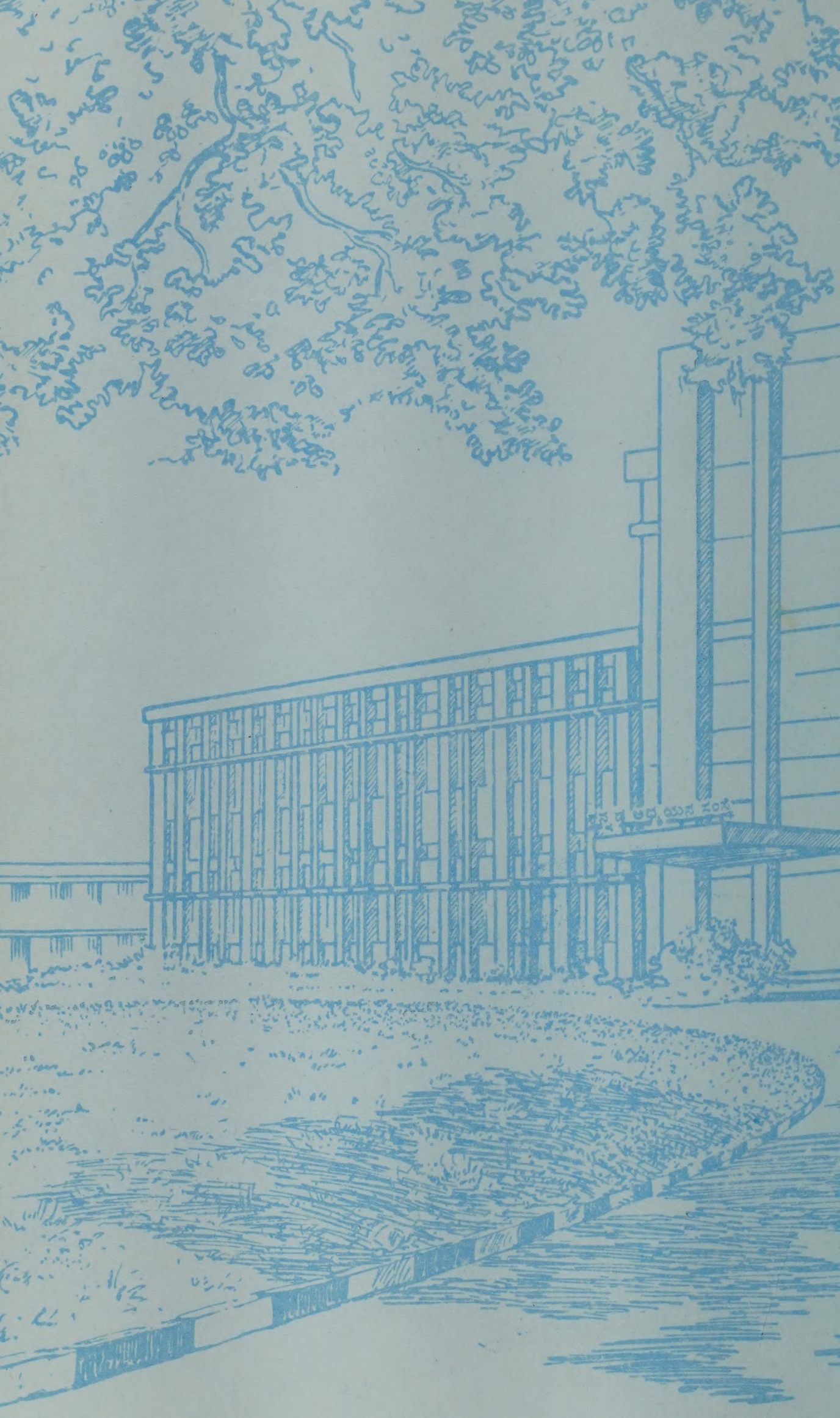
KUVEMPU INSTITUTE OF KANNADA STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF MYSORE



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General Editor : Dr. D. K. RAJENDRA

D. R. BENDRE

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KUVEMPU INSTITUTE OF KANNADA STUDIES
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1997

First Edition 1997

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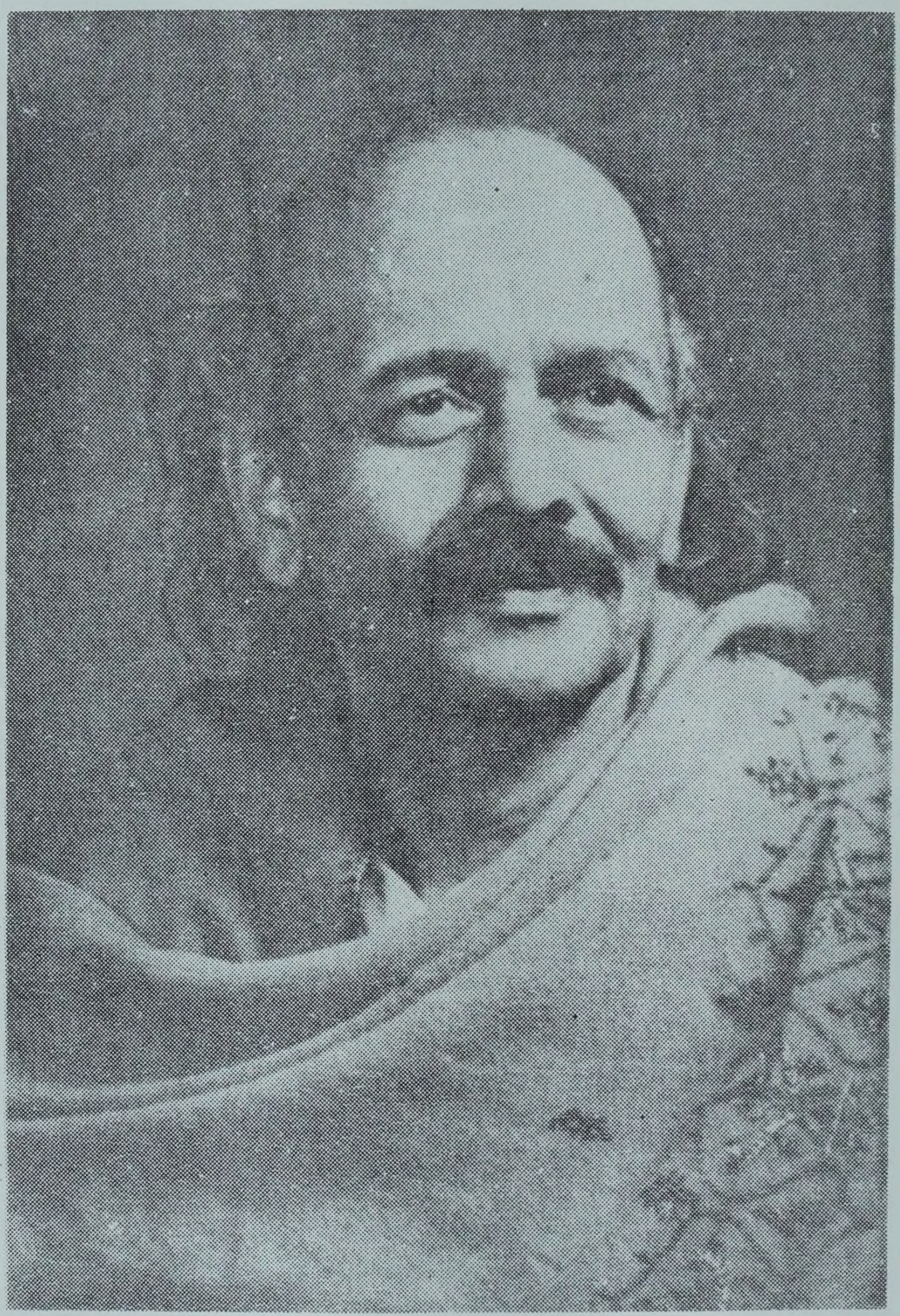
Price : Rs. 40

For Copies

Director, Prasaranga
Manasagangotri, Mysore-570 006 (INDIA)

Printed in India by the Director
Mysore University Printing Press
Mysore



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INTRODUCTION

Kannada, is one of the major languages of India. It is the language of the state of Karnataka in South India. Karnataka has an area of about 1,92,000 square kms and a population of about 45 million. It has made a unique contribution to the wealth of Indian Culture through its significant achievements in literature, in fine arts and in religious and spiritual realms.

Kannada people have their unbroken literary heritage of more than one thousand years. This heritage is very rich in quality, variety and volume. From the point of view of antiquity Kannada is next only to Sanskrit and Tamil in India. The earliest specimen of the language belongs to the fifth century A.D. The first available work is *Kavirājamārga* (9th century A.D.) which deals with poetry and poetics. No doubt, a fairly rich literature was existing prior to this, although the works of this period have not survived. The tenth century A.D. was the golden period in the history of Kannada Literature. The twelfth century A.D. was the age of revolt. A new literary form called *Vacana*, which is very typical of Kannada Literature, emerged during this period. As a result of it literary usage came closer to the spoken word. Saint poets, epic poets, scholar poets and mystics have subsequently enriched the tradition.

The modern period may be said to begin with the advent of English in the 19th century. Modern Kannada literature takes its colour and tone from the contemporary life. It has been acquiring new dimensions from ever-growing contact with the literatures of other regions of the country and the world at large. Kannada Literature with its glorious past and rich heritage has great achievements. The literary products of the last half a century assure us of a great future.

This series, 'Kannada Writers and their Work', is designed to provide the student of literature and general reader with a brief introduction to the major writers in Kannada Literature. It is proposed to cover almost all the important authors of

ancient and medieval periods also, although a beginning is made with modern writers.

Each volume in the series narrates the story of the life and achievements of an outstanding author who has contributed significantly to the growth and development of Kannada Literature. In addition to a biographical and historical account, the volume contains a brief critical assessment accompanied by a chronological list of events in the author's life and an exhaustive list of his works. I hope this series will be of immense value to all those who are interested in literature in general and Indian Literature in particular.

Curiously enough, it is our everyday experience in this country that even a student of one literature of one linguistic region is totally unfamiliar with the names of great writers of other linguistic regions, in striking contrast to his knowledge of world literature. It is a matter for regret that not many serious attempts have been made to improve the situation. I am sure that the publication of this series, ' Kannada Writers and their Work ', will fulfil a long felt need in this direction, at least as far as Kannada Literature is concerned.

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D. K. RAJENDRA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to Sri G. Krishnappa, M.A., Senior Inspector of Motor Vehicles, Regional Transport Office, Mysore for having accepted our invitation to write a monograph on Sri D. R. Bendre for the series, 'Kannada Writers and their Work.' The Mysore University Printing Press has done the printing work. I owe my thanks to its staff. I must express my thanks to my colleagues Sri N. S. Sharada Prasad, Sri H. Ganesha Aithal and Sri K. G. Prakash for their assistance in the publication of this book.

D.K.R.

PREFACE

Kannada literature has produced many worthy poets like Govinda Pai, K. V. Puttappa (Kuvempu), D. R. Bendre (Ambikātanayadatta), P. T. Narasimhachar (Putina) and others. These poets have enriched Kannada poetry by their contributions. I am a connoisseur of poetry, and since my school days I have been attracted by the poetry of Bendre and Kuvempu. My inclination for poetry is due to the poetic atmosphere I had in my house. My father late H. Gangaiah was an ardent lover of Lakshmisha. His recitation of Lakshmisha's 'Jaimini Bharata', enchanted the evening assemblage which used to meet in my house at Bangalore.

I came into contact with Sri D. R. Bendre in Bangalore. The more I read his poetry, the more I was attracted by his style and presentation of facts. In course of time, I became completely engrossed in his poems and made it a point to spread his thoughts wherever I had the occasion to meet people. I have published in Kannada a work of Bendre's life entitled 'Hāḍuhakki Ambikātanayadatta' in 1995.

On the request of Dr. K. Kempe Gowda, the then Director of the Kuvempu Institute of Kannada Studies, the work on Dr. D. R. Bendre has been prepared in English for publication through the Mysore University. I am extremely grateful to Dr. K. Kempe Gowda for his encouragement and I take this opportunity to acknowledge my thanks to Dr. D. K. Rajendra, the present Director of the Institute for his kind co-operation.

My respectful thanks are due to Prof. M. Madaiah, Vice-Chancellor of Mysore University for the publication of this work.

I am obliged to Dr. C. P. Krishnakumar, Dr. Pradhan Gurudatta, Dr. Vamana Bendre, Dr. K. S. Sharma, Dr. K. Anantharamu, Sri C. Naganna, Sri H. S. Harishankar, Sri Shivaramu Kadanakuppe, and Sri Kyatanahalli Ramanna for giving me useful suggestions in preparing this work.

My thanks are also due to Sri N. S Sharada Prasad, Sri K. G. Prakash and Sri H. Ganesh Aithal for their meticulous reading of the proofs. I also record my indebtedness to the Director of the University Printing Press Sri B. S. Siddegowda and his staff for executing the work in record time.

9th August, 1997 **G. KRISHNAPPA**

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1

Bendre's Life and Career

Among the romantic poets of the twentieth century Karnataka, the outstanding names are of Govinda Pai, Kuvempu and D. R. Bendre. Bendre is known to the literary world by his pseudonym *Ambikātanaya Datta*. His full name is Dattatreya Ramachandra Bendre. He is familiar with his friends and readers as "Bendre." He was born on the 31st January, 1896 in Gunari house situated in Potanisa Lane in Dharwar town. His parents Srimati Ambavva (Ambikā) and Ramachandra Bendre belong to the Vedic Chitpavan Brahmin community. Their mother tongue is Marathi. Originally they belonged to Kêlasi village in Ratnagiri district, but due to inconvenience there, they shifted to Triambakesvar, where they took to the worship of Ganapati, the god of wisdom and remover of obstacles.

The elders of the Bendre family, being directed in a dream by their deity to go and prosper in Karnataka, came with their family and settled in Tāsagaon village in North Karnataka. Thereafter, one of the members of the family, Ramabhatta Bendre went to Shirahatti and became the family priest to the House of Lagoos. He was a Vedic scholar learned in *daśa-grantha's* and was known for his piety. He renounced his family ties and accepted sanyāsa. His samādhi is at Shirahatti. His son Appa-bhatta had two sons—Ramachandra Pant Bendre and Bandôpant Bendre. Ramachandra Pant being learned in the Vēdas, followed the priestly profession of his forefathers. Bandôpant, having passed in the Matriculation examination was employed in Pune city. Ramachandra Pant Bendre had four children of who only two survived. The elder of the sons is poet Dattātreya Bendre, the subject of our study. The second son is Krishnaji Bendre.

In regard to his family surname 'Bendre', the poet states that "his ancestors coming from Konkan were known as

'*Vedres*' or Vedic priests and this term in course of time turned into *Vendre* and finally to *Bendre* "[1] Poet Bendre was born in the residence of his grandmother Gōdu Bai. His childhood was spent there. Poor as she was, Gōdu Bai eked her livelihood by keeping an eating house (*Khānāvaḷi*) and brought up her grandson with love and comfort. About her the poet has said : "My granny Godu Bai belongs to the Dikshit family of Nargund. She is a brave lady. The more I think of her sufferings in life, the more respect is generated in me towards her. She is a saintly woman."[2] Her mother Ambakka was born in Talavai village near Dharwar. She was a devotee of saint Brahma Chaitanya Maharaj. She made a pilgrimage with her husband to the saint's ashram at Godavale and was blessed by the saint. She spent the evening of her life in the worship of Lord Rama.

Bendre was born and brought up in Dharwar's folk environment. He was deeply involved in it. The Wizard of folklore as he was, he has brought the folk element in his literary works. About the influence of folklore on him he states : "I cannot say when folklore captured my heart : I might have been influenced by the folk songs sung by my mother and granny while grinding corn or by the mystic songs of the minstrels I have heard in the wakeful hours early in the mornings. Dāsara Govindappa used to sing to the beating of the *tāḷa*, the devotional song 'Tell me my fair friend, who is the charmer who cometh riding on the divine bird Garuda?' or the song 'Jaya Pāṇḍuranga. What shameful act have you performed !' with reference to the teasing of the Gopis by Lord Krishna. These devotional songs would mesmerise me. On hearing it dawned Balabasava's folk song ' The Neem tree having grown shadeth the sacred Linga ; So hath Basava born to shelter the Jangamas, *suvvi*, *suvvi*', I would have the impulse to run and feast my eyes on the holyman. Folk singers like the Gollas, Kavalethigaru and Durgamurgis with their melodious songs have enthralled me and I was happy to hear their music. In fact, any *tana-tandana* tuneful folksong was pleasing to me."[3]

Bendre, born in Dharwar, spent his boyhood in the company of his friends deserving Nature and life with the keenness of a poet. About his boyhood Vamana Bendre states: "In his school bag, along with his books, he carried such play things as *Chāvanga*, *Kuntalapi*, *Buddibala*, *Ganjipu*, *Huli-halla* On the way to school he would forget himself witnessing Monkey-play, Bear-dance, the acts of the performing Bull or the way-side acrobatics His friends made fun of him, when he went to school at its closing hours Nature, more than the School, appeared to be the true teacher for Bendre."[4]

The religious atmosphere of home also influenced Bendre. He would listen with devotion the Chidambar Bhajan and Rama Bhajan of his mother and grandmother. They used to narrate him the lives of Saints Brahma Chaitanya and Akkalakot Maharaj and read for him from Marathi works *Śivalīlāmṛta*, *Gnana Sindhu*, *Hari Vijaya* and *Pāṇḍava Pratāpa*. He was influenced by these holy books. Pious as he was, he was devoted to his mother.

The religious atmosphere at home and the desire to acquire knowledge made Bendre a copious reader. By 1912 he had exhausted reading all the books in the famous "Bhārata Pustakālaya" (library) at Kāmanakaṭṭe in Dharwar town. The reading habit became part of his life. The books he read, the life he saw, the joyful celebrations and processions he witnessed, the tearful funeral scenes he saw and the games he played when young—all these shaped his poetic life. In 1907, when he was twelve years of age, his father died from 'Gaṇḍamāla' (scrofula). Thereafter the responsibility of educating him and his two brothers fell on his grandmother.

In spite of poverty and hardship in his early life, Bendre was destined to receive higher education and be a scholar. It was his misfortune that his grandmother, the supporter of the family, died on the day his matriculation examination result was announced. He was left in the lurch along with his mother and brothers. However, there was kindly light from Heaven: his uncle Bandopanth Bendre, who was known for his benevol-

ence, had a good profession in Pune, invited his nephew to take up his studies there. Bendre studied at Fargusson College between 1914 and 1918 and took his B.A. Degree. There was the Marathi atmosphere in his uncle's house which enabled him to study Marathi and gain mastery over it. He helped his uncle in editing the manuscript Newspaper *Muraḷi*. During his stay at the college, intelligent students longed for his friendship, while the teachers accepted him as their favourite student.

Bendre's mother tongue being Marathi and his favourite language Kannada, he had mastery over Marathi and Kannada literature by the time he came out of the college. He used to discuss with his friends plays of Kalidasa, Lokamanya Tilak's *Gitā Rahasya* and Tagore's Bengali plays, short stories, poems and novels. With the help of Bābu Rao Bide he mastered Hindi and gained knowledge about astronomy. He had started writing Marathi, Sanskrit and English verses while still a student at college in addition to composing Kannada poems. His sweet voice suited for singing was in fact, a gift from his mother as he used to sing with her while he was a boy. His effective style of recitation enabled the hearers to catch the very essence of the verses he sang He recited his Kannada poems for the first time at the Karnāṭaka Sangha in Morobā-dāda Waḍe.

During his college studies in Pune, Bendre formed a friends union called 'Sharada Mandal' where he engaged himself in literary pursuits. He made critical study of *Gaṅgālahari* which he had by-hearted when he was young, the enchanting epic *Jaimini Bhārata* in Kannada by poet Lakshmisha, Shankarā-chārya's *Saundarya-Lahari* and *Gnānēswari* of Gnyaneswar. In the same period he had studied Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, the poetical works of 'A.E' Khaleel Gibran, Shelley, Keats, Emerson, Morris, Rabindranath Tagore and Aurobindo. His studies extended to dramatics, sciences and politics as well. He discussed various subjects with his friends and, with the gift of gab, he enchanted the audience. The elders of Dharwar were happy as Bendre was spreading the essence of Dharwar Kannada in Pune.

A new chapter began in Bendre's life on his return to Dharwar after his education in Pune: He had blossomed into "Ambikātanaya-datta", the poet. The incidents that occurred on his return may be recalled in his own words: "After appearing for the B.A. examination in 1918, I returned to Dharwar during summer, more with the object of attending the fourth Kannada Sahitya Sammelan there. The 'Gokale House' at Kāmanakaṭṭe, familiar to me, was like her mother's home for my grandmother Godu Bai. She was a poor lady, whereas Mrs. Gokale belonged to a rich family. Inspite of this difference, there was so much cordiality between the two ladies that Mrs. Gokale looked after my granny as her elder sister. I wrote some of my earlier Kannada poems there. My longer poem *Kôgilê, Kôgilê, Yendu bande nee?* (Cuckoo, my cuckoo, when did you arrive?) was written in Gokale's house. The inspiration for this poem was the cuckoo which used to arrive every year in Spring time and settle on the tamarind tree in the backyard of Gokale's house. With this longer poem, a few short poems, some translations and with some experimental metres and allegories, I had become a poet. Let alone my being a poet, my friends who were elder to me extolled me as the new poet of Karnāṭaka. With this feather in my cap, I went as a guest to the annual celebrations of the Karnātaka Sangha of Deccan College, Pune. I read my poem 'Tuttoori' (The Trumpet) at the Pune Karnātaka Social Club. The longer poem 'Kôgilê' first published in *Swadharma* magazine was later included in my collection of verses *Sanchaya*. My poem 'Tuttoori' appeared in the monthly magazine of verses, published upon my encouragement by Vasanta Rao Jattar."[5]

Bendre had been appointed as a teacher before the announcement of the B.A. results. Having thus gained support for life he went to Pune and took his mother to live with him at Dharwar in the home he reestablished at Kāmanakaṭṭe. He worked at the Victoria High School for three years and served at the National College for another three years.

Bendre, with his poetic propensity, proved an able teacher and earned the name "Bendre Master" by his earnest and efficient teaching. He recited with his student–friends Sundara-kāṇḍa from the Rāmāyaṇa, *Vāyu Stuti*, *Saundarya–lahari*, *Vishṇu-sahasra–nāma*, *Lalitā–sahasra–nāma* and moved with them as one among them. As an ideal teacher he imparted the knowledge he had gained to the students and started a manuscript magazine to imbibe in them the literary taste.

Bendre's two poems "Tuttoori" (The Trumpet) and "Saraswati" were first published in the August 1918 issue of *Prabhat* magazine under his pseudonym "Ambikātanaya-datta". "Tuttoori" symbolically announces Bendre as a poet, contains love for the mother-land and language and warns his countrymen to wake up for action. The poem represents the sacred voice of the Kannadigas –the people of Karnāṭaka. In the introduction to the poem, Bendre has stated that on hearing about "Tuttoori" of poet Kesavasuta of Maharashtra, he wrote the poem and that he has not read Kesavasuta's poem.

Bendre married Rangu Bai in 1919. She was the daughter of Jogalekar Vasudeva Rao of Nargund, the bride being the choice of his mother. Rangu Bai had only Primary education. But she was an inspiration for Bendre's poetry. She assumed the name Lakshmi Bai, as it is wont in the traditional Maharashtrian families. Appearing as the heroine of *Sakhīgita*. Lakshmi Bai has been the inspiration for the poet's philosophical reflections; He has idealised her by stating: "Who can know the end of the bond that binds us Kāmakshi, my love!"

Bendre, the School Master, lived a life of poverty. The person who supported his ideals, encouraged his literary aspirations and kept the cosy home for him was Lakshmi Bai, his wife. Richness or poverty mattered little for Bendre, as he was satisfied with the bounty of his literary world. Vamana Bendre, his son, who is a poet and a scholar himself, gives this account of him: "The School Master's poor family flourished without any trouble. The idea that he was poor and his family was facing poverty never occurred to Bendre, as he was indifferent

to richness and luxurious life. 'A timely meal lost is a holy fast gained' was his dictum."[6]

The songs that Bendre sang amidst the joys and sorrows of domestic life, the births or deaths of his children, the rise and fall of fortune have remained the soul stirring songs for the Kannadigas. His first son Kshêmendra died in the same year he was born. His second son Râma, the apple of his eyes, growing up and giving him delight died in the prime of youth at the age of twenty, before he could take up family responsibilities and develop within himself literary tastes like his father. His death was like the bolt from the blue for Bendre. In his poem "Karuḷina Vacana" Bendre has pictured the cruelty of Kâla, the Lord of Death and has elevated his woeful pain to poetic heights. His third son Bhaskara and the sixth son Ananda died within a year of their births, like their eldest brother Kshêmendra The fourth son Panduranga (b. 1928) was employed in a private firm in Pune and having retired is the proprietor of *Śrī Māta* publications and is publishing Bendre's works. Bendre's fifth son Dr. Vāmana (b. 1935) is the holder of doctorate for his thesis, "Lakshmisha's *Jaimini Bhārata*, a Study." He was the head of the department of Kannada in Kittel College and is now in the thick of scholarly pursuits after his retirement from service. He is spending his time usefully in editing Bendre's works and giving publicity to them. Bendre's first daughter Lalita and the second daughter Prema died within a year of their births, like their three brothers aforesaid. The third daughter Mangala (b. 1939) is married and is happily living with her husband.

Bendre's first work in book form is *Krishnākumāri* published in 1922. He has called it a story-poem in shaṭpadi metre. He states that "if he had not the encouragement and help from Aluru Venkata Rao, Jatara and Kadadi Master, this poetic work would not have seen the light of the day, lying restlessly causing anxiety to his kith and kin, like the undelivered child in the delivery room."[7] In this statement he mentions the difficulties one has to meet in publishing Kannada books.

He remembers with gratitude persons who have helped him in its publication.

For Bendre his mother was everything in life. In fact, his pseudonym 'Ambikātanaya-datta' indicates the depth of his love for her. It means 'Dattatreya Bendre, the son of Ambika.' He had lost his father early in life and, in his impressionable age, it was his mother Ambavva who moulded him into a worthy person, cautioning him at every step how to act in life. She led her life facing calamities boldly. She showed by experience that a woman, though weak may, at the same time, be a capable mother. Her death in 1924 at Kāmanakaṭṭe was a severe blow to Bendre. He felt that by her death he was an orphan in the world. It was his mother's influence which enabled him to write poetry of empathy. He was capable of discovering the entire world from the term 'mother.' His concept of his mother is found in his own statement : "My mother gave me life ; taught me to speak ; enriched me with culture. She is identical with the humanity of the world. She set in me pity and compassion by placing me in the bosom of the universe. Ambika's legs, bosom, neck, stomach, lips, eyes—each of these had the touch of these five virtues. In her was contained eternal tolerance, the flavour ofvows of ages gone by. I, who was denied by fate of the presence of father and his relatives, discovered my masculine principle from the strong will of my mother, grandmother and great-grandmother."[8]

Bendre, who had the experience of successfully running the literary association 'Shārada Mandal' in Pune in 1915, started the famous 'Geḷayara Gumpu' (Friends' Club) in Dharwar. This club consisting of his equals, elders and young men was devoted to literary pursuits, Kannada language and culture. Being a formal association the club had no institutional structure. Its President was Bendre and its members were Sham. Ba. Joshi, Madhura Chenna, Betageri Krishna Sharma, V. K. Gokak, R. S. Mugali, Siddhavanahalli Krishna Sharma, Simpi Linganna, Prahalada Narêgalla, Krishna Kumara Kallura, Shē. Gō. Kulakarni, Narayana Rao Sangam, Belagamkar and

others. The literary club became a public institution in 1924 and in the same year a hand-written magazine *Nasuku* (The Dawn) was submitted to the poetry competition held in Anantapur. It contained, along with the compositions of several members of the club, 43 poems of Bendre. The club had thus become a centre for the poets in the making.

'Geḷayara Gumpu' under the leadership of Bendre initiated the celebration of *Nāḍa-habba* (National Festival) and conducted popular cultural functions. The club celebrated festivals relating to poet Pampa, Vidyaranya and Rabindranath Tagore. Under the auspices of the Club, Bendre engaged himself in the task of publishing literary works and spreading literary taste among the people. He translated into Kannada Gurudev Rānaḍe's *The Secret of the Upanishads* which is in English. With the help and co-operation of Halasangi friends, *Garathiya Hāḍu* a collection of folk songs was published. He started the publication of the newspaper *Jaya Karnāṭaka*. An anthology of poems by the young poets of 'Geḷeyara Gumpu' written with the objective of unification of Karnāṭaka, was also published by Bendre in 1929 under the title *Nannadu yee Kannaḍa Nāḍu* meaning "Mine is this Kannada Land." In 1929 he published a collection of poems by different poets under the title *Hakki Hārutide* (The Bird is Flying). This collection coming after B. M. Shri's *English Geetagaḷu* (English Lyrics) is an important collection in the Renaissance Movement in Kannada. The 'Geḷayara Gumpu' utilised *Vāgbhuṣana* and *Swadharma* newspapers as its mouthpiece, while Bendre travelled throughout Karnataka as the literary messenger, inspiring among people the love for Karnataka and Kannada language. The 'Geḷayara Gumpu' continued to work without involving itself in any kind of politics and ceased to exist in 1933.

On behalf of the 'Geḷayara Gumpu', Bendre recited his poem 'Hakki hārutide, nōḍidirā' at the Kannada Sahitya Sammelana 'literary conference' held in Belgaum in 1929. The lofty ideals in the poem enthralled the listeners and he was recognised as 'Bendre the Song-bird.' Inspired by the poem-

Masti Venkatesha Iyengar has stated : "The recitation of the poem has maddened me. I do not know whether people would understand what exactly I mean by 'madness.' I mean by it the state of aesthetic joy I was subjected to like many others. When he recited the poem he was wearing, on his head the Hindustāni *Pagaḍi* (headgear) with which he appeared to me like the Wizard of Poetry. I have expressed this feeling about him in an *Aṣṭa-ṣaṭpadi* poem. The terms 'madness' and 'wizard' do not give us their real connotation. In fact, in their original sense they mean merely power, peace and beauty. I mean only these terms Bendre's poetry contains these qualities. Those who understand his poetry cannot but submit their minds to these qualities."[9]

Bendre's *Gari* (The Feather), the first collection of poems was published in 1932 with the encouragement of Masti Venkatesha Iyengar and other friends in Bangalore. These poems were written during the period from 1916 to 1932. They are with their enduring nature popular.

The poem *Narabali* included in Bendre's collection of poems 'Gari' sent him to prison as the poem was considered seditious against the British rule in India. As his uncle was seriously ill then, he was released on bail. During this period, sitting in the Devi temple, he wrote the lyric 'Bhṛngada Bennêri Bantu'. After his release from the remand prison in 1932, he went to Dharwar. He had lost his post as a teacher and the Government had ordered that he should not be entertained anywhere. He went to his uncle's house in Pune in 1933. He entered the College and took his M.A. degree in 1935. Unfortunately, his uncle, who had supported him during his studies died in the same year.

Bendre's brother Krishnaji married a girl from the family related to his aunt and settled in Pune, while Bendre with his family returned to Dharwar. The period between 1933 and 1944 was hard for Bendre, as he was unemployed. Masti Venkatesha Iyengar invited Bendre and offered him the editorship of "Jeevana", a Kannada periodical for which Masti was the

publisher. Bendre travelled all over Karnataka and, propagated literary taste among the people. His travels brought with him a host of friends and well-wishers. In 1941, invited by the Educational Committee of the Gadag High School, he accepted the Head Master's post there. He went with his family to Gadag, but to his misfortune, by the end of the year, the school authorities terminated his services. He returned to Dharwar in 1942 and joined as a part-time teacher at the New English School, where he taught three days in a week. The proper post for his Master's degree was offered to him the same year by the Commerce College of Pune. There he worked as a part-time Kannada lecturer. The same year he had the darshan of Śrī Mātā.

Amidst the turmoil of life, Bendre's poems were blossoming: *Murthy Mattu Kāma Kasturi*, *Sakhīgīta*, *Uyyāle*, *Nāda-Leelê* volumes of poems and the Kannada version of *Mēgha-Dūta* were published in succession. Recognising his service to Kannada literature, the Kannada Sahitya Parishat honoured him by electing him as the President of the 27th Kannada Sahitya Sammelan held in Shimoga in 1943. He spoke on the occasion about the antiquity and richness of Kannada literature.

Bendre was able to settle in life after his appointment as Professor of Kannada in 1944 at the D.A.V. College, Sollapur. But deep sorrow set on him and his wife, as cruel Fate snatched his eldest son Ramachandra and his youngest son Ananda within the span of a week.

While in Sollapur, Bendre had the darshan of a saint Prabhākar Mahāraj, a centenarian, who had the vision of Datta and of Gulavani Mahāraj who was also a devotee of Datta. Bendre, influenced by them, became the worshipper of Datta.

Bendre was interested in Jainism and Jaina literature. He wrote to the Marathi monthly journal 'Sanmati' devoted to Jainism. He studied the Jain doctrines and taught the students of 'Srāvikāśram' a Jain Orphanage. He explained to the students the greatness of Jain poet Ratnākaravarṇi's *Bharatēśa Vaibhava*, an epic which depicts the glorious life of the Jain

Prince Bharata. Bendre rendered selfless service for the betterment of the orphanage. He made a critical study of Jain and Virashaiva literature during his stay at Sollapur. The Siddarāmeshwara temple and Shubharaja Muth were congenial for his philosophical reflections and self-realisations.

In 1946, the people of Dharwar celebrated Bendre's Fiftieth Birthday and presented him with a purse of ten thousand rupees. Felicitation Volumes were published on the occasion. His friends in Galagali town published 'Hāḍu-Pāḍu', a collection of his poems. The members of Ananda Sahitya Mandir of Galagali brought out a review of his poetical works, namely: '*Bendre Vāṅgmaya Darśana*' and presented it to him. The people of Sollapur also celebrated his fiftieth birthday and with the purse presented to him Bendre purchased books required for his studies.

Bendre retired from the Sollapur College in 1956 at the age of sixty. His well-wishers celebrated his Sixtieth Birthday. The poet donated the money presented to him on the occasion to Aravind Ashram of Pondicherry and returned to Dharwar to reside in the house at Sādhanakêri. In the same year he was appointed as Literary Adviser to Dharwar *Ākāshavāṇi.* The Sahitya Parishat also celebrated his Sixtieth Birthday. He continued to be literary adviser to *Ākāshāvāṇi* till 1966. During this period he engaged himself in writing and wherever he was invited tried to interest people in literature. His profuse writing during this period resulted in the production of several volumes of poetry, namely— "*Gaṅgāvataraṇa*", "*Sūrya–Pāna*", "*Araḷu–Maraḷu*", "*Chaityālaya*", and "*Jeevana Lahari.*"

Bendre's collection of poems "*Araḷu Maraḷu*" won the Central Sahitya Academy Award in 1959. He was honoured by the Tumkur Municipal Council in 1962 and by the Mysore Dasara Committee in 1964. His collection of poems and reviews "*Samvāda*" in Marathi won the Kelkar Award in Maharashtra. He was hailed as a distinguished poet and honours were showered on him. He was conferred Honorary Doctorate in 1966 by the University of Mysore, while the

Government of Karnataka honoured him with the Sahitya Academy Award and an Honorarium for life. The Hindi Prachara Sabha of Hyderabad bestowed on him the title "Sahitya Āchārya." His Seventieth Birthday was celebrated at Shirahatti. His wife Lakshmi Bai, delighted at his success remarked : "I am happy. I may now gladly depart." She, who was the first listener of his poems, who encouraged him in his writings, who had served as wings for his successful flight as a poet died before him. Her death was unbearable for Bendre. On her death he recited the poem "*Saundarya Lahari.*"

In 1967 Bendre named his Sādhanakêri residence as "Śrī Mātā." In 1968 the Central Government conferred on him the title "Padmashree." In the same year the Karnataka University honoured him with the Honorary Doctorate. He became the Fellow of the Central Sahitya Academy in 1969. Meanwhile, he enriched Kannada poetry by adding to it his volumes of verses, namely "*Namana*", "*Sañchaya*", "*Uttarāyaṇa*", "*Mugila Mallige*", "*Yaksha-Yakshī*", "*Nāku-tanti*", "*Idu Nabhōvāṇi*" "*Vinaya*" and "*Matte Shrāvaṇa Bantu.*" The Karnataka Government produced a documentary film on his life. His 75th birth-day was celebrated in Sollapur. To crown his poetic glory, the Nation's highest Literary Award "Jñānapītha Prashasti" was conferred on him in 1974 for his volume of poetry "Nāku-Tanti" published in 1964. This has been the second award for Kannada literature, the earlier one having been awarded to poet Kuvempu for his epic "*Sri Rāmāyaṇa Darshanam.*" The Kasi Vidya Peetha of Varanasi honoured Bendre with the Honorary Doctorate in 1976. His pen did not totter even in his old age. He composed two more volumes of poetry, namely "*Olavê Namma Baduku*" and "*Chaturōkti.*" In all, his contribution to Kannada literature are 29 collections of poems, 9 volumes of reviews, 14 plays, one volume of short stories and articles in lighter vein, 2 collections of speeches and 7 translated works. He wrote 5 Marathi books and one book in English.

It is indeed a wonder that even in old age Bendre showed interest for new subjects and hobbies. After 1976 he studied

Mathematics, Physics and Biology. As age advanced, he was interested in the exactitude of figures than the clarity of words and paid more attention to research in numerals. He prepared his own mathematical tables, circles and squares for his research in the service of Mathematics. Bendre's last writing has been his foreword in 1980 to Vineeta Ramachandra Rao's translation of "Suvarṇa Vṛishṭi." He was exhausted by age and unceasing work on numerals. His health was failing. His son Vamana Bendre admitted him to Harikishan Das Hospital in Bombay, where the stones in his gall-bladder were removed. But he had lost his appetite; his health worsened. He died at 1–10 p.m. on 26th October 1981, the day of festival of Lights—Deepavali. Optimstic and always accepting pleasure and pain alike, Bendre, true to the dance of delight he has expressed in his poem, discarded the mantle of life and attained heavenly bliss, as if with his own song on his lips –

To the rhythmic beat of Day and Night,
To the endless span of eternal Time,
To the Carnival of birth after birth,
Come Ye, let us dance
Come on, let us dance.

NOTES

1. Shakuntala Nayika, *Bendre anna, Bendre Smruthi* (Ed.), Bangalore, 1982, p. 31.
2. D. R. Bendre, 'Sahityada Virat Swarupa', Dharwad, 1974, p. 4.
3. Ibid.
4. Vamana Bendre, 'Bendre Jeevana Parichaya', Dharwad, 1990, pp. 14–15.
5. D. R. Bendre, 'Sahityada Virat Swarupa', p. 37.
6. Vamana Bendre, 'Jeevana Parichaya' Bendre, p. 26.
7. D. R. Bendre, 'Krishnakumari', Preface, Dharwad, 1990, pp. xxxxi.
8. D. R. Bendre, 'Sahityada Virat Swarup,' pp. 50.
9. Srinivasa, 'Nadaleele', Foreword, Dharwad, 1989, pp. xx, xxi.

2

Bendre's Poetry

The form of traditional Indian literature changed into modern with the influence of English literature introduced in the Indian Universities by the colonial rulers in the Nineteenth Century. "Old order changeth giving place unto new," and Kannada literature was no exception to this rule. In poetry, the traditional forms of *Vṛtta*, *Kanda*, *Ṣaṭpadi*, *Campu* receded and the Kannada poets were attracted by the lyrics, sonnets, blank-verse and the ballad. They dealt with various subjects within the frame-work of smaller poems. Govinda Pai, Bendre, Hattangadi Narayana Rao, B. M. Sri, Kuvempu and others, who are pioneers of modern Kannada poetry gave new form to versification.

When Bendre commenced his poetic career, there were no new poetic models which he could adopt, a fact which we find in his use of *Ṣaṭpadi* metre in his earlier poems. As an experiment some English verses had been translated into Kannada: Hattangadi Narayana Rao had translated a few verses under the title *Āngla-Kavitāvaḷi*. B. M. Sri produced *English Geetagaḷu* (1924), many of the poems in this collection being translations from Palgrave's *Golden Treasury of English Songs and Lyrics*.

The local colour is strong in Bendre's poetry. The atmosphere of Dharwad, – its life and culture, the natural beauty of his native land have influenced him. He has drawn inspiration from Lakshmisha's epic *Jaimini Bhārata*, the works of Kalidasa, Jayadeva's erotic songs in *Gīta Gōvinda*, and the wisdom of the poet, Sarvagna. In the early phase of his poetic career he was influenced by the Irish poet 'A. E.' (George William Russell : 1867–1935), whose poems pervade with celtic mysticism and to an extent by the strange vision of William Blake. He was to a larger extent attracted by the Romantic poets. English Romanticism dates from the year 1798 when the

Lyrical Ballads of Wordsworth and Coleridge appeared. It was the first articulate protest against the matter and form of the predominant type of poetry. According to the romanticists, "the supreme faculty of the poet is imagination, which must take the place of reason for the solution of the riddle of life and nature." They agree in seeing the poet as a guide, the prophet and the seer. Like the romantic poets, Bendre renounced the poetic diction of previous centuries and created a fresh set of poetic associations with words and drew unusual images and varied verse forms. He refashioned the language of poetry as much as the matter. Like the romantic poets, he saw Nature and Man with new eyes and his whole work is an attempt to communicate that new vision. He broke with tradition, seeking his subjects in the small happenings of country-life ; in the talk of country men, women and children ; in the doings and feelings of humble people or in the emotions aroused in his own heart. For these new subjects he employed a new language. He took to his model the speech of the country people freed of its grammatical mistakes. Some of the romantic poets in England set their imagination over the supernatural as is seen in Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* ; but Bendre did not go beyond the limits of real life and the ordinary incidents and people. Like Shelley he was inspired by love—a love not limited to mankind, but extended to every living creature, to animals and flowers, to the elements, to the whole of Nature. He holds passionate communication with the Universe. He becomes one with the cuckoo and enjoys its flight. In his poem "Hakki hārutide nôḍidirā" he asks us whether we have seen the bird in its flight·

According to Bendre, the ancient poetry concentrates on matter, while the modern poetry is predominantly imaginative. Dream is incidentally a prominent metaphor in his poems, as can be seen in the poem "Tēlāḍuvāga" (While Floating). He considered that his mission was to show the people of Karnataka the beauty of Kannada language. This beauty of the language he found in the folk-songs. He used the spoken language as the medium for his poetry. Some of his poems which are in folk

style are "Karuḷina Vacanagaḷu" in the *Kāma Kastūri* collections and "Uyyāle", "Narabali", "Puṭṭa Vidhave", "Heṇada Hinde", "Annāvatāra", "Tuttina Cīla". In the early phase of his poetic life he concentrated on such themes as human relations in a variety of forms, and the life and nature of the community. During the latter part of his poetic career he appears as a visionary, during which period he explored the language in all its different forms for his expression in poetry.

While Emerson admits that Nature plays an important role in the creation of poetry, Bendre is convinced that Nature is the motive force behind the creation of *Chandas* (metre). The rhythm in poetry comes out of the joy the poet derives from Nature. The rhythm of most of Bendre's early poems comes from the use of "Ṣaṭpadi" (Sextuplet) metre or in its altered form, while the rest are in couplets, quatrains, songs and ballads. He achieved unique success in providing lyrical touch to ṣaṭpadi metre, which is generally used for epic poetry in Kannada. The lyric form in English poetry found good expression in his ṣaṭpadi styled poems. Poets like B. M. Sri, Kuvempu and others have been successful in composing lyrics. Bendre's story poem *Krishnākumāri* and several poems in *Sakhīgīta* and *Gari* collections are in the ṣaṭpadi metre. However, the lyric is the salient feature of Bendre's poetry. Though some of his poems such as "Muddaṇa", "Śāntakavi", "Ravadi" are in ṣaṭpadi metre, they are undoubtedly lyrics.

The use of simile and metaphor enhances the beauty of the poem, when the poet has the knowledge of the subject on which he constructs the poem and the command over the language for expressing his thoughts. Bendre's use of metaphor can be seen in "Pātaragitti Pakka", "Chaḷiyāke", "Rāgarati" and other poems. The description of Nature in "Chaḷiyāke" becomes more picturesque with the use of metaphor. Likewise, in the poem "Beḷagu", the Sun-rise is glorified by the use of metaphor. In one of his poems the mother's boundless love for her child is expressed with the use of metaphor thus: "Thou art the sluice of my lake of love." Her love outflows for her child like the

brimful of lake water flowing out of the sluice. In the poem "Jōgi" the word "*Pāḍu*" (ripeness) pervades the entire poem: The ripe fruit of poetry swings to the enchanting tune. In "Saṇṇa Sômavāra" Bendre illustrates the way in which the devotee attains salvation and reaches Heaven, like the *Sajje* plant growing up with its crown of corn at the top looking towards the sky. The corn (the reward of devotion) is like the illuminating light of the *Būruga* tree. Attaining salvation is also compared to the rivulet Shālmili begetting the name Gangavali as it widens its course and falls into the ocean passing through Gokarna. Bendre appears to depict in his short story *Nirābharaṇa Sundari* the belief of a sect of Jains that Mallināthā is a female deity.

Sakhīgīta is an example for Bendre's experience brought to light by memory. The dominating feature of the poem *Saṇṇa Sômavāra* is also the poet's memory. Here are some lines about his experience from it :

> Considered, it appears anyway
> Like seeing some dream ;
> Eyes, somehow are wide-open ;
> In memory's lane glitters the oil-lamp ;
> Where have those times gone my friend ?

In the poem "Tumbittu Hālageri" (Halageri tank was full), in the *Maryāde* collection, memory dominates in bringing the past events relating to the poet and the religious customs and practices observed in his native place.

As W. B. Yeats puts it, "Our images must be given to us, we cannot choose them deliberately." Bendre's poem "Kaṇḍudanê Oḷagondu" in the *Hṛdaysamudra* collection is true in respect of the use of imagery. The poems "Tumbi Banditttu" (The Bee had come), "Mahā Prasthāna" relate to Bhakti Bhandāri Basavanna's and Aurobindo's deaths respectively. They are examples for Bendre's effective use of imagery.

Some of Bendre's poems dealing with traditional culture, social discipline and morals are tinctured with satire. His

"Narabali" (Human sacrifice) directed against British Colonial rule is satirical. Wherever he found the world at fault, he has used the cudgel of satire, but not as severe as that of Jonathan Swift. He has criticised the distortion of language in poems like "Overhaul", "Babel" and "Madhuvāta Ṛitāyatē." His satire is set not to ridicule but to correct the society from its follies and foibles.

Bendre's first published poem "Tuttūri" heralded his fame. Hearing him reading his "Hakki hārutide Nôḍidirā" in 1929, Masti remarked that he read the poem with the gait of a magician. B. M. Sri, recognising Bendre's genius said "Don't hide your light under the bushel."

Bendre's early poems have been concentrated on lyrics with general themes such as "Rātrigê" (To the Night), "Hasi Hambala" (Fresh desires), "Ānandavê" (O joy), "Jēnu Huṭṭu" (Bee-hive), "Ravadi" (Reed), "Jīvada Geḷati" (Life's Partner) and "Gaṇḍasu Heṅgasige" (Man to Women).

Rātrigê contains six stanzas in semi-vārdhaka ṣaṭpadi metre. The first two stanzas describe the numbness of the sleeping body. In the third and the fourth stanzas the poet seeks the bosom of Mother Sleep, like the child seeking the proximity of the mother. In the fifth stanza is described the eternal creation of Nature, while in the last stanza the poet in the mood of surrender (Śaraṇa Bhāva) submits to the will of God. At this stage he prays God to float him on the banyan-leaf (vaṭapatra) in the storm of deluge. The first two stanzas read thus :

The tongue is like the bell without its clapper,
The mind is like the bird caught in the net.
O God, like the meaningless rhythm
Life has become lifeless ;
The eye can't see the display of colours vivid,
The ear can't hear the melody of music,
The tongue can't know the taste, nor
The nose the differences of smells.

"Hasi Hambala" depicts the fresh desires of the poet. The poem "Ravadi" (The Reed) reveals how the reed appearing as useless, when converted into a pipe, will be as melodious as the flute of Lord Krishna.

Bendre started his poetic career in the beginning of the twentieth century and wrote till the end of his life. His early experimental stage was between 1917 and 1923. His talents blossomed into beautiful verses between 1923 and 1956, while his poems of more mature thoughts dealing with life and philosophy came in the last phase. He wrote several of his poems from personal experience some of which are "Kuṇiyōṇu Bārā" (Come, let us dance), "Ēḷu Kannikeyaru" (the Seven virgins), "Bhāvagīte" (The Lyric), "Manadannê" (the Beloved), "Têlāḍutâva Kanasu" (Dreams are floating).

Between 1933 and 1944 Bendre suffered economic instability and disruption in family life; it was during this period of life's turmoil that he created some good poetry among which are "Narabali" (The human sacrifice), a satire on British rule that sent him to prison; "Moorti mattu Kāmakastūri", "Uyyâle" (The Swing), "Nāda-leele" (The charm of sound), "Sakhīgīta" (Song to the Beloved), and "Pāḍu" (The Song).

Eight years after the first publication of "Krishnākumāri", Bendre's collection of poems *Gari* (The Feather) was published in 1932. The special features of his poetry are visible in this collection. Novelty in expression, the use of folk diction are seen in the verses "Beḷagu," "Chaḷiyākê" "Tuttina Cīla" ('The Bag of Morsel'), and "Kuṇiyôṇu Bârā." There is also the philosophical outlook in such poems as "O Hāḍê" (Oh! Song). In fact, Bendre's poetic faculty blossomed in his earlier poems contained in *Gari*. The collection is unique in the harmonious blending of concepts, use of symbols and metre. There is the successful employment of metaphor in "Hakki Hārutidê Nōḍidirā." The poems contained in this collection were composed between 1916 to 1932.

"Gari" symbolises the poems in this collection: Like the feather (gari) falling from the wings of the bird flying against

the wind, the poems are released from the flowing thoughts of the poet. His creative power is like the limitless sky; his imagination is as swift as the birds flight. Bendre states that the verses in *Gari* are like the feathers dropping from the bird. He anticipates the readers to enjoy the poem :

> Blow the feather up with delight
> Take it up to the sky till
> It disappears from sight.

Living in the transitory period of Kannada literature from ancient to modern form, Bendre was compelled to experiment in poetry. He has introduced new experiences and situations in his poems. Like him prose writers like Cha. Vasudevaiah in his *Ārya-Kēērti* (Fame of the Aryans : 1896) and M. S. Puttanna in his novel *Māḍidduṇō Mahārāya* (As is the action so is the reward) had to experiment in new style in prose. There is uniformity in the choice of the subject in Bendre's early poems. His imagination runs high. In one of his lyrics he has compared the creativity of the poet to the bee that sucks the flower in order to make it grow into a ripe fruit. His ability to reduce ideas into concrete form is found in his early poems like "Caturmukha Saundarya" (The Fourfold Beauty), "Candra" (Moon), "Niddê" (Sleep) and "Lîlê" (Play). They are all poems on intellectual quest. He has used ṣaṭpadi metre in these poems instead of the lyrical form. He is influenced by Sri Aurobindo's concept that beauty is four-fold, namely sensuous, imaginative, intellectual, and spiritual. He has brought these qualities of beauty in the poem "Caturmukha Saundarya." In the poem "Candra" (Moon), he speaks about the sensuous appeal of the moonlight. According to mythology, Candra (also called Sōma) marries the twenty-seven daughters of Rishi Daksha and was cursed by Daksha to wane, since he showed favours to Rohini only, the fourth daughter of Daksha. But, on the appeal of the rest of his daughters Daksha reduced his curse and allowed Candra to periodically wane and increase. Hence, the dark and the bright fortnights of the Moon.

Bendre refers to this sorrowful state of the Moon (Candra). Like the Moon who forgets his sorrow and brings delight to the ocean on full moon nights, Bendre inspite of his sufferings in life, wants his songs to bring joy to the people.

Longer Poems

Bendre's poems contain variety of themes. Some themes are on society and spiritual quest, while some are distinctively of varied interest. A few poems like "Krishnākumāri," "Kōgilê," " Ge—" (" To —") and "Manasukharāyana Magaḷu" come under the category of longer poems. He has not attempted epic poetry like his contemporary "Kuvempu" (K. V. Puttappa).

His first longer poem "Kōgilê" (Cuckoo) is in the form of ballad. The inspiration to this poem is the Cuckoo which used to arrive every year and perch on the tamarind tree in the back-yard of a neighbour Mr. Gokhale. It is a love poem : A peasant girl meets the Cuckoo every year on its arrival and listens to its sorrowful notes. She understands her own pangs of love from the cuckoo's longing notes for its mate. The poem reminds us of Edgar Allen Poe's "The Raven" and Keat's "Ode to a Nightingale."

According to Bendre, the poem "Ge—" ("To—") deals with the dream of a lover. Just like things are clouded in a dream, an infatuated lover cannot see the divine nature of love. However, the poet does not make hard and fast distinction between Kāma (passionate love) and Prêma (Pure love). The hero of the poem admits that his thoughts are filled with 'impure love' but when he sees his lover in his wakeful state, the sexual love disappears giving place to divine love. This reminds us of the treatment of love by Wordsworth in "Laodamia" and Rossetti in "The Blessed Damozel" in both of which divine love overpowers sensual love.

Manasukharayana Magaḷu

"Manasukharāyana Magaḷu" (The daughter of King Manasukharāya) is another longer poem. It deals with a love–

lorn young princess in her solitary state. Like the Lady of Shelott, in the Arthurian legends, who is fed up with seeing the images of Knights in her mirror, the daughter of Manasukharāya is impatient of seeing from her chamber men moving in the street and says:

> How long a time should I see
> From Windows ten open'd
> In all directions, the magic
> Of Charming Mother Nature.

Bendre has not written many poems of story value. Some of his narrative poems are "Krishnākumāri," "Ondu Kanasina Kathe" (The Story of a Dream), "Puṭṭa Vidhavê" (Child Widow) and "Kathêyādaḷu Huḍugi" (The Girl became a legend). While "Krishnākumāri" contains essentially a story, the other poems containing episodes in life are lyrical in nature. "Kāmôdê," another story poem is in *Hāḍu-Pāḍu* collection.

Krishnākumāri is Bendre's first published story-poem. It is in the form of 'Vārdhaka-ṣaṭpadi' metre. The influence of poet Lakshmisha is clearly visible in this poem. The sources for the poem are Col. James Todd's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajastan*, Vol. I (1829) and *Āryakīrthi*, a Kannada work by Vasudevayya, published in 1896. Bendre calls it 'Ākhyāna Kāvya' (narrative poem), though its structure is dramatic.

The poem depicts the ideal love of Krishnākumāri, the flower among the Rajput maidenhood. She is in love with the Rāṇa of Jodhpur. Unfortunately he dies, whereupon her father Bheem Singh of Udayapur decides to get her married to Rāṇa Jagath Singh of Jaipur. Meanwhile, Mān Singh, who succeeds to the throne of Jodhpur defeats Bheem Singh. Mān Singh and Jagath Singh fight for the hand of Krishnākumāri and both die in battle. Taking advantage of the situation, the Muslim army invades Udayapur. While the army is besieging the fort, Krishnākumāri consumes poison and dies to save herself from falling into the hands of the enemy.

Bendre makes Krishnākumari's tragedy a spiritual triumph. Each mouthful of poison thrice taken by her represents her elevation to spiritual glory. The poison thrice taken represent the three "guṇas" namely, *Tamas* (ignorance), *Rajas* (desire) and *Sātvik* (perfection). On attaining perfection of the soul Krishnākumāri gains eternal bliss. She overpowers earthly desires and elevates herself to divine heights. Bendre ends the poem with the following note :

> Thou love's creeper, the figure of Love !
> Desired they as the creeper of passion.
> Princess as tender as a flower,
> They ended thee on the altar of sacrifice,
> Moon faced maiden, Fate ordained the
> Rajputs of evil desire should perish.
> Depart thee blessed damozel and accept the
> love of God.

Sakhīgīta

"Sakhīgīta" is another longer poem. It is autobiographical in nature. It has several significant facts relating to Bendre's poetic and domestic life. He states : "In this song I have allowed the creeper of joys and sorrows of ordinary married life and to grow on the supporting structure of my own life." The poem covers seventeen years of his life from 1919, the year of his marriage to 1936, the year when this poem was written. In another poem "Bālyakāṇda" he describes his earlier days.

The poem contains more than nine hundred lines made up of forty units of six stanzas. Each stanza is a quatrain. Each unit ends with the following burden :

> Who can surmise the end of the
> Tie that binds us O, Kāmākṣi !

Description of the seasons and the meaningless dialogue between lovers are the charming part of the poem. The poet recollects his wedding , he pictures the marriage procession

watched by the Moon from his heavenly dwelling, the lotus dancing with joy. In the busy bustle of the people assembled, the bride is brought before him. Bendre pictures the event thus :

Behind the curtain thou my bride
Brought to me by Fate stand
Holding the garland in hand.

The contents of "Sakhīgita" are (1) Bendre's early years of marriage, (2) his discovery of his creative powers, (3) his married life, love and its nature, (4) his new experiences, troubles the political effect of his poem "Narabali" which caused him to go to prison and the anxiety to keep the family without want, and (5) the tragic events in the family, his stay with his uncle of Pune, the death of his infant daughter. In this phase of life Bendre and his *Sakhi* (wife) find themselves more separated than ever.

In "Sakhīgita" Bendre distinguishes between the present experience and the memory of the past. Memory is different from the active present. Yet he skilfully brings before us the events of the past as if it is happening before us. The memory of the days with his young bride takes the form of long song. He describes her with the ardency of a lover :

Eyes smeared with *Kāḍige* black,
Hair in plaits, red on the lips
Colour on the nails—all blended
Like the melody of the flute ;
What a gait in her pose, charm in
Her whisper and in talks repeated !
Love unstaled at play, the dream
Brightens, her anger enchants
As the magic of love unfolds !

In "Sakhīgita" the poet himself is the hero. His wife is a simple lady. She states that her husband's ideals are lofty as the heights of Gowrishankar, while her life's ambition is like those of the common people flows like the Gaṅga on the plains of the

Earth. There are times of happiness and times of suffering relating to their lives. However, the poet is optimistic of the future, his depression vanishes. The hope of new life and happy companionship with his beloved emboldens him. His self examination and the truth he realises thereby is new to Kannada modern poetry. "Sakhīgīta" has the romantic and the realistic elements and stands as a rare poetic creation.

Treatment of Love

Poet Bendre looks upon love from different angles : mother's love, love between married couple, parental love, love for humanity and animals, love for Nature—all these are depicted in his poems. The mystic force and spiritual ecstasy make his poetry all the more beautiful.

Bendre has abundant love for his mother Ambika and grandmother Gôdhu Bāi. He remembers his mother's loving care and tender touch even at the age of seventy. His close attachment to his mother is revealed in his pseudonym "Ambīkā'tanaya'datta" (son of Ambika). In his poem "Pañcakōśa-garbha," Bendre mentions five mothers—the mother who has given birth to him, the mother who taught him to speak, the mother who set him as a family man, the mother who has settled in humanity, and the Universal Mother. His love for his mother is found in several of his poems, especially in "Uyyāle" (The Swing) collection. In *Tāyi Nage* (Mother's smile) he speaks of her thus :

> When the world has brightened
> With the light of thy smile
> No other smile my eyes shall seek.

Mother's Love

We find divinity in Bendre's depiction of the mother's love for her child. The picture of Brindavan where Lord Krishna spent his childhood and exhibited his "Leela" (miracles) enchants him ; the tender love of Yashoda for Krishna stands before him. He examines the secret of the child's nature, the

bondage between mother and child, and occasionally the attachment between father and child. He concentrates his thoughts also on the philosophical questions and the answers the parents derive through the child. There are several poems dealing with the love of the mother for her child, "Tāyi-Koosu" (Mother and Child), "Molê" (Breasts), "Ākānkṣe" (Desire), "Yārigū Hēḷōnu Byāḍa" (Let us not tell any one), "Sanjeya Jāvige" (To the Sunset), "Konêya Hêḷikê" (The last Statement) are some of the poems coming under this category.

There is the divine element in Bendre's poems relating to children. He brings to his mind's eye the childhood adventures (leela) of Lord Krishna. He pictures Yashodha as the mother and the child as infant Krishna. The mystery of the child blossoming in the mother's womb is described with several illustrations. The child is nourished with the mother's milk like the cotton nourished in the bud and the lotus by water. The child's natal growth is further described thus :

> Grinded the grain turns into flour,
> Boiled the flour turns into food,
> Eaten the food nourishes the body,
> Blossoms the breasts with milk
> To feed the child when born.

Bendre attributes divinity to the child suckling milk from the mother's breasts :

> The breasts are no milk cups
> Nor cups of flesh, but the feet two
> Of the cradle in which the
> Divine mother swings her child to sleep.

The concerns of poetry are universal in nature. The Australian poetess Judith Wright expresses similar sentiments in her poem "Woman to Man".

The mother speaks with religious fervour about her breasts from which her child sucks milk. The lines are in the form of Rhetorical Question :

These breasts, my lady, are cattle sheds
For my infant Gōpāla ; tied here are
Milch cows *Kapilā* and *Kāmadhēnu*,
Hence where is want for him ?

These are the models of Himalaya's peak
That feeds *Gaṅga* with perennial water
Hence where is want for him ?

In the triumphant march of love
These are the twin conches my child blows.
Hence where is want for him ?

Bendre wrote *Celuva* (Charmer) after his visit to Bṛndāvan, where Lord Krishna's childhood was spent. The whole poem has a religious touch. The mother, like Yashodha, wonders at the charm and pranks (*leela*) of her child. She puts herself the metaphysical question.

Who is this charmer
Who keeps himself
With self delight ?

The mother sees in the playfulness of her child the mystic powers—divine avatāra (the incarnations) of the Supreme Being :

My child ! thy face resembles mine,
Thy body divine resembles thy father's ;
My child ! the kindness in thy eyes is mine ;
The trend of thy looks is thy father's.

Ah ! charmer, Omniscient since Creation,
In the charm of man beauty of woman blending,
You have been created as Neo
Ardha-nārī Naṭêśha !

In "Tāyi-Koosu" (Mother and Child) Bendre tells about the mother's anxiety for her child while she is attending to her work :

No rest at work ;
All her thoughts on her child ;
The pious mother puts

Her child in the cradle of her heart
And sings for him the lullaby.

The mother's affection in regard to her child is revealed in the poem "Āśê-Nirāśê" (Hope and despair). The metaphor used here is remarkable:

You are the vast sky of my desires,
The mansion of my expectations
You are the flower of my hopes and despairs.

Some poems have the quality of nursery-rhymes: The stanza in "Avvana Seere" (Mother's Saree) runs thus:

I can't fold
My mother's saree,
I can't count
My father's money,
Ah! What brilliance
Covers the sky!

Bendre inspires children to be happy all through the seasons. The verse "Caḷiyirali, Maḷêbarali" containing the children's joy and consoles those who are depressed in spirit due to worldly sufferings:

Be it cold or rain
Or snow falling,
Sun scorching;
However the Seasons
We'll submit to joy
And bring others joy.

Whatever hardship, whatever losses,
When good and bad in numbers come,
We will sing with joy
Make others submit to joy
To force out depression that mirth may shine.

Everything in Nature and life attracts the growing child. He is excited about the colours of the butterfly and invites his sister to see the movements of the insect :

Sister, Have you seen
The Wings of the Butterfly ?
What vivid colours
On its wings !
The Eye of the Peacock.
In the middle

Inspiring desire,
Seen yet eluding
It flies everywhere,
It's here and yet there !

In "Tēlāḍuvāga", a poem in *Gāṅgāvataraṇa* collection, the poet pictures the child cosily asleep wrapped with the end of his mother's saree. The child finds one or two threads of the saree in his tiny hand. The poet compares the few threads to the few fine poems which may come out of the volume of poetry he may write.

Kuṇiyōṇu Bārā is one of the famous songs of Bendre generally classified under his love poems. It also appears as the song of dance for the children. The refrain of the song is "Kuṇiyōṇu Bārā" (Come, let us dance) which is quite suitable for the ecstasy of the dance. Although it's extremely difficult to do full justice to the rhythm and raciness of the poem via translation its equally difficult to resist the temptation of quoting it in full for whatever its worth.

Breathless
Peeping
Seeking in and out
From the hiding,
Tired of false counting
Come let's dance.

This life is only Māya
Ding-dong, Ding-dong
Once like this, once like that
Come let's dance.

I am *not*
You are *not*
You are not within me
No pain in death
Come let's dance.

Let's forget what exists
Let's open what is not
Let's pour milk and honey
Come let's dance.

Why the beat for the song
Why stringed instrument
Why worry for the tune
Why steps and ankle-bells
Come let's dance.

Shaking hands
Twisting the body
Thaka thaka, thai, thai
Come let's dance.

Round and Round
Circling round
Bloating with joy
Moving together
Come let's dance.

To the beat of Day and Night
To the span of eternal Time
To the carnival of life and death
Come let's dance.

The ocean of milk
The mansion of joy
On opening wide
Come let's dance.

Let this happiness spring
To the Worlds Fourteen,
Let joyful faces brighten
Come let's dance.

Songs of Sorrow

Bendre has written elegiac poems on the death of his children. Coleridge defines elegy as the "form of poetry natural to the reflective mind. It may treat of any subject, but it must treat of no subject for itself, but always and exclusively with reference to the poet himself."

"Pāḍu" (Fate) is a long poem with more than two hundred lines divided into fifty three stanzas, one for each week of the year. The death of Bendre's son Rama is the subject of this poem. Bendre's sorrow finds no bound for he had lost six children during the period from 1922 and 1944. The sad experience is ventilated in the poems "Päḍu" "Giḷiyu Pañjaradōḷilla" (The parrot is not in the cage), "Bērobbara Makkaḷigāgi" (For the sake of others' children), "Ha! Saroo" (Ah! my daughter Saroo) and "Arpaṇa-Tharpaṇa". "Pāḍu" ranks as the best of Bendre's elegiac poems.

"Arpaṇa-Tarpaṇa" was written in 1923 when Bendre's first child Kshemendra died. He laments :

He would have been
The Flute–a poet,
But Death took him away.
I thought he was a
Member of the house
But he was only a guest.

"Giḷiyu Pañjaradôḷilla" ('The parrot is not in the cage') was written in 1927 when the poet's child Bhaskara died. The poet derives consolation for his loss from Saint Purandaradāsa's song with the same refrain—"Giḷiyu Pañjaradoḷilla." In 1937 the poet lost his second daughter Prēmā. This tragedy had affected his son Vämana who was then two years old. The poet

had given the pet name "Bāla" to Vāmana. "Bāla-Prêmā" is the song which signifies the attachment, the brother Vāmana had for his sister Prêmā. The most tragic events in the poet's life occurred in 1944 when Death took away his infant son Ānanda and his grown-up son Rāma. These events are described in the elegiac poem "Ah! Ānanḍa" and "Pāḍu" in *Hāḍu-Pāḍu* volume of poetry.

Bendre's love for his mother

Bendre's love for his mother is a recurring preoccupation in his poems. In "Dhārwāḍada Tāyi" he praises her for her love for him. In "Tāyi" (Mother), he speaks with deep regard for her, for bringing him up. There are none equal to his mother who gave him birth, taught him to speak and to live with dignity. He assumed the pseudonym "Ambikātanaya Datta" in token of his deep love for her as has been pointed out earlier. Her death was a great loss for him, for she had stood with him in his sorrows and sufferings. Reflecting on her death he realises that it is only after a person's death that we realise his worth. He mentions his sorrow thus:

> I wept and wept with the thought
> Could the mother who gave me my body,
> Disappear leaving her mortal frame?
> I wept consciously and otherwise,
> Sweating in body, sweating in mind.

Love Poems

Bendre's earliest poem in love is generally traced to "Kōgile" (Cuckoo), where the sad song of the cuckoo is suggestive of "Viraha" (pangs of separation) of a girl listening to the birds. G. S. Amur speaking of Bendre's love poems states that "Bendre firmly rejected Western model of the relationship between the sexes and put forth three models in the Indian context."[1] These models are *Rati*, *Sati*, and *Sakhi*. All these terms refer to women. *Rati* is the lady who attains love through sufferings and separation; *Sati* attains love through

devotion and penance, while *Sakhi* seeks her love in the framework of marriage. In the Indian concept *Kāma* means desire and in the case of sex the same term denotes the attraction and desire between man and woman. *Prēma* is pure devotion binding the lovers.

Among the *Kāma*-centered (desire) poems, "Rāga-rati" in the *Gari* volume of poetry is significant for its manifold attraction. The emotional experience of the maiden returning home with her pot filled with water and the man following her, their mutual attraction and desire, the evening atmosphere suited to the situation —all these are significant features of the poem.

In Indian mythology Kāma, the God of sexual love is formless and disembodied and inspires passion in others. Rati, his wife, is the counterpart of Venus, the Roman goddess of Love. The two aspects of love are "Sambhōga Śṛṅgāra" (union of lovers) and "Vipralambha Śṛṅgāra" (separation of lovers causing 'viraha' or pangs of love). In Bendre's poetry separation of lovers is vividly described. In the introduction to *Mēghadūta* the epic narrative inspired by Kalidasa's *Mēghasandēśa* he describes how the Earth longs to meet her lover, the Sky from whom she is separated and pours tears of joy (rain) when she meets him :

From primordial times the Mother Earth
Separated from her Lord the Sky
Turns round and round ;
Meeting her lord
Showers tears for greenery to bloom.

Bendre calls Kāma as the child born out of the mind of Brahma. The divine nature of love is seen in the separation of Yaksha and Yakshi in *Mēghadūta* :

My fiery passion extinguished
Light may yet burn ;
Separation growing in passion
May yet blossom into love.

Love binding the lovers when they are together, takes the shape of longing when they are separated. The separation (Vipralambha Śṛṅgāra) of lovers is described by the poet in several poems. The separated woman suffers from pangs of love within the sphere of womanhood. She is steadfast in love. On the other hand the man in "viraha" (separation) finds an inner voice within himself, praying his lover to come and join him as in the poem "Sakhi Bārê Bārê" (My love, come and join me).

In the poem "Prīti" (love) Bendre unfolds the two forms of love—one, 'the sublime' and the other 'the terrible' with reference to Śiva's tāṇḍava (dance):

The male smeared with ashes,
The tender creeper like female
Enjoyed the bliss of love ;
Embracing, gloating, crying
She pushed the male down and danced
Trampling him till she was tired.

In 'Pañca Bāṇa' (Five Arrows of Kāma) in the *Yaksha-Yakshi* volume, Bendre states that love springs fearlessly from fear itself. The idea is that, like Kama, the Lord of Love obtaining pardon from Śiva having surrendered to him, mortals also may win the favour of Kāma in their love affairs.

Bendre's love poems are mostly in simple folk language. Metaphors and folk style make these songs more attractive. These love poems picture the spirit, charm and happiness of young couple. Bendre brings in the truth that love springs in the prime of youth and recedes like the wave after touching the shore. In 'Jīvana Kalyāṇa" (*Araḷu-Maraḷu* collection), he states :

Youth is like the wave ;
As it comes recedes quickly.
Come to the love meet
For the endless play of joy.

The poem "Hū—ūmhū" describes the shyness and yet the acceptance of kisses by the beloved from her lover. The situation is realistic from Bendre's pen :

Lip and lip pressing the kiss
Sowed the seeds of sweet words ;
Dreaming of honeymoon
Love wandered around :
Morsel, morsel, morsel
Every mouthful of morsel
was kiss, kiss and kiss.

But the tragedy of her love is revealed in the fact that she is recollecting the sweet moments when her lover was alive. The past was Spring time for her, while the present is dead for all purposes :

The faded flower is mocking
Who is the flower of the past
No, No! It is no more.

In blind love the lover's whisper reaches his beloved through his moustache, while his beloved's whisper in shyness appears to him through her sparkling eyes. In "Jīvada geḷati" (Life's partner), the lovers' close proximity is spoken of as the meeting of their souls. The beauty of Bendre's love poems lies in the elevated thoughts and the ethical touch he brings in them. In "Gaṇḍasu-Heñgusige" (Man to Woman) he says in metaphorical terms that true love between man and woman is like the interwoven threads which form the cloth :

On mine and thine minds'
Moonlight loom, setting the
Threads of mine and thine hearts,
The weaver weaves
The never-ending cloth for eternity.

The intensity of love is shown in some poems like "Nannavaḷu" and "Pōri, Pōra". In "Nannavaḷu" (My darling) a youth is deeply immersed in the admiration of his lady love. He compares her beauty with the natural beauty of the evening,

the night and dawn. In "Pōri–Pōra" (Boy and Girl) the lovers create their own world in their binding love. They have no touch of sorrow and have belief in true love.

The sad aspect of love is "viraha", the separation of lovers. The poem "Olimeya Kiccu" (Flame of Love) presents the girl who, charmed by the looks and laughter of her lover, longs to meet him. "Giṇi Hēḷa" (Tell me Parrot) is another poem relating to the separation of lovers. The parrot is the symbol of love in Indian traditional songs. The love–lorn lady in the poem compares her lips red by chewing 'pān-supāri' with the parrot's beak. Feeling her lips untouched by the kiss of her lover, she wonders where her thoughts could be. Evidently she is thinking about her lover.

The appeal for favour by a lover from the lady whom he loves is the subject of the poem "Indra–hū and Candra hū" (Flowers from the gardens of Indra and Candra). There is the tone of surrender in his appeal. He has brought flowers from the realms of Indra and Candra, the heavenly Gods, just to win her favour. All his thoughts are set on her.

Love may bring lamentable tragedy or bliss by the purification of the soul. Tragedy is seen in the poem "Bisilugudire" (Mirage). The folk language used provides natural tone for the narration. The poem begins with the lover's recollection of his meeting his beloved. He reflects : "What a smile thou had when I first saw you on the river bank !" But, as the poem ends, the pain the lover has for the loss of his lady love touches our hearts :

In the web of poverty the heart silenced ;
Like the burnt cake and withers and leaf
    On life's oven
    Came thy end early.
Dear, thy laughter was
Like the early monsoon rains,
Lightning's glare falling bright
On thy graceful face,
Straight I saw thy beauty.

Tell me smiling once how thy laughter was;
Now where it has gone;
What a smile thou had, when
I saw you on the river bank!
How much, how much the laughter!
Elevated graceful laughters they were!!

There are several poems on the severity of separation, among which is "Hubbaḷḷiyāvā" (Native of Hubli). In this recollection is the cause for sorrow. Strangely enough, a prostitute desperately in love with a man from Hubli sings this mournful song. She says:

If asked to stay he would get away,
If I was unwilling he would stay:
He would bring handfuls of money
And would say "Take it."
If I agreed to accept he would press my hand.

The desperation of Rādhā for her divine lord Kṛiṣṇa is the subject of "Rādheya Pāḍu" (The fate of Rādhā), when she in search of him he presents himself before her and says:

Where had I gone,
I was only in thy heart.

"Elliruve Rājagambhīrā" (Where are you the dignified prince) and "Mareyuvīyō, Ariyuviyō" (Would you forget or know about us)—these are considered as two of the famous love poems of Bendre. In both the poems the sad fate of three hundred young ladies in the king's harem longing for love is described. In the former poem these love-lorn ladies pray the prince Rājagambhira—to pay attention to them. They are like lifeless dolls denied the pleasures of love. They lament:

Our lives pray for light
Air denied we are creepers thin;
We who have blossomed
Are yet in the state of buds:
Where are you beloved prince—
Rājagambhirā!

In the second poem "Mareyuviyō, Ariyuviō" the lament of the neglected ladies in the King's harem is heart-rending. After being loved by the king in the first meeting, these unfortunate women are cast away by him. Their searching question to the king is whether he would forget them or realise their sad fate.

On Nature

Bendre withdraws from earthly care and seeks solace from Mother Nature. In his love for Nature he appears to have been influenced by the romantic poets of the nineteenth century, Rabindranath Tagore and 'A.E.' (James William Russell: 1867–1935). The ability to understand the moods of Nature, and the proper diction for expression have made him a successful Nature poet. He has been successful in capturing the spirit of Nature in his poems like "Sukha Sparśa" (Pleasant Touch), "Kiḍi" (Spark), "Beḷadiṅgaḷa Nōḍā" (Look at the Moonlight) and "Gamagamā Gamāḍasatāva Malligi" (Jasmine smells sweet). He personifies Nature as in "Bā Bēga" (Descend Quickly), wherein he states that the relation between Earth and Mēgha (cloud) is essential for the seed to grow. He implores Mēgha-rāja thus:

> O ! Visible Life, why
> Stayeth thou in Heaven
> Like an onlooker;
> Come down, let the
> Fields be worthy for the yield.

In the closing lines of this poem Bendre imagines that there is a give and take understanding between the visible Earth and the invisible Lord of the clouds.

Bendre brings in moral values in his poems. On "Dṛṣṭi-Sṛṣṭi" (Vision and Creation), he compares flowers of different hues to different communities and prays that they be united :

> On branches and branches flowers
> Of different hues have bloom'd

Origin being the same, fruits different
All of us are likewise blended.

Bendre's Nature poems generally deal with the seasons and the flora of his native region. The spring time flowers dominate his poems. In "Ṛtugāna" (the Song of Seasons) in *Nādalīlê* volume of poetry, he describes the seasons and their significance. Summer is tolerable while Winter is the symbol of births and deaths. Winter is described in "Caḷiyākê." Among his popular poems is "Vasanta Mukha" (The Face of Spring). The poems describing the rainy season are "Chitteeya Maḷêya Sañjê" (Evening of Chitta rain). Chitra is a star in the constellation ; "Maḷêgāla" (Rainy season), "Hubbi Malê" (Rain influenced by the star Hubbi also known as Pubba), "Maḷêgê Prārthanê" (A Prayer for the rain), "Bāro Sādhana Kērigê" (Come to Sādhana lane) "O, Āṣaḍha" (To the month of Āshaḍha).

Bendre takes delight in describing the beauty of flowers. The flowering of the tamarind tree is described in "Hūta Huṇisi" (Blossomed tamarind tree). Sunlight, the wind, the shadow of the tree, the dry leaves on the dust are described in the poem. The poem on the sunflower—"Sūryapāna"—has a philosophical touch. The flower is the symbol of yoga and divine truth as expounded by Aurobindo. The sweet smell of the Jasmine is described in the poem "Gamagamā Gamāḍsatāva Malligī."

Bendre's poem "Beḷagu" (The Dawn) reminds us of Wordsworth's "Upon Westminister Bridge", T. Campbell's "To the Evening Star" and "Summer Dawn" by William Morris. Bendre has used new metre for the poem. The calm pervading the dawn is the symbol of peace. Here are a few stanzas :

On the Eastern Mansion of the Sky
Is spread the light of Dawn,
Spread the light of Dawn ;
Door opening, Day dawning
World is wet with sunshine
Wet with sunshine.

The colourful spring of Dawn
Has its evenly rays spread
Its evenly rays spread ;
Sweet smelling closed buds
Have in rhythm open'd
In rhythm open'd.

From tongues of trees and bushes
The song of birds is heard
Song of birds is heard ;
The forest land has transformed
In a moment into a divine world
Into a divine world.

Of the six seasons on the Indian Calendar, namely Vasanta, Grīṣma, Varṣa, Śarat, Hēmanta and Śiśira, the season Varṣa under which the Śrāvaṇa month appears is dear to poet Bendre. In śrāvaṇa rains give life and charm to Nature. The month has brought to the poet peace as well as sorrow. It is the month when his children Vāmana and Mangaḷa were born. It is also in the same month that he lost his mother, his wife and his friend Chennamallappa. It is in Śrāvaṇa that India got her political freedom :

The birth of Bhārata's freedom
Has been in Śrāvāṇa's rain and heat,
The month holding its mirror upto
Nature turns the destiny of life.

In "Śrāvaṇa Vaibhava," the splendour of the month is described in detail by the Sakhi to her friend :

Friend, look around
How the mantle of earth
Looks with green and yellow !
What if they are flowers of grass,
They are in festive mood.

The broken rainbow
Has spread over fields
The dry grass revived
Stands happy with joy.

The gem in Earth's womb
Sends her sparkling beauty
To make a journey
To the colourful carnival.

Bendre personifies Śrāvaṇa in his poem "Bāro Maganê Śrāvaṇa" (Come, son Śrāvaṇa). Shravana, the son of Earth is pictured as coming from the West riding his windy horse.

He is the harbinger of rain. A stanza of the poem runs thus:

Mother Earth thy mother
Bearing heat of the season
Bore and delivered you.
Alas ! remembering you
Her tears have wetted
The edge of her garment.
Anyway you have come :
Come thou son of Śrāvaṇa.

—From *Nādalīle* volume

Some of the poems on Śrāvaṇa are "Miñcu" (lightning), "Śrāvaṇada Hagalu" (A day in Śrāvaṇa), "Maḷêgāla" (Rainy Season), and "Mattê Bantu Śrāvaṇa" (Śrāvaṇa has come again). For the poet the month is full of life, the very essence of existence. His joy knows no bounds during the period :

For Śrāvaṇa mind is lost
Where is my attention
Mad I am intoxicated with joy,
I, who am Ambikātanaya Datta

Bendre described the natural beauty around his residence in Dharwar during Śrāvaṇa in his popular poem "Bāro Sādhana Kērigè" (Come to Sādhana Kêri—Kêri=lane) :

The tree reaches the sky,
There is song in the bush
Plays the wind everywhere
Sorrow hath fled from here
Tell me friend, where else
Can you find a sight like this !

The Mystic Poems

Philosophical quest is the main theme in some of Bendre's poems. Like the sage, he withdraws from worldly affairs to concentrate on spiritual matters. He accepted the ideals of all religions and was influenced by Sri Aurobindo, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Vivekananda, Ramaṇa Maharshi, Tagore. His poetry pervades with the message of these great men. He believed that man is not complete without religion. He explains with lucidity the hard to understand philosophical doctrines and metaphysical truths.

Bendre has stated that during his reflections it occurred to him that *Ātman* (the Soul) is like a stone and that the life of a statue symbolises man's inner self. He has illustrated this mystic theory in his *Mūrti* volume of poetry. This volume contains a series of poems all linked to the same subject, namely the inquiry on soul. The first poem in the volume is "Praḷaya-Sṛṣṭi" (Deluge and Creation) and the last one is "Koneya Hāḍu" (The Concluding Song). These two poems support the other poems in the series. The first poem starts with the note "None has known the truth, None can find it." The second poem in the series is "Bāḷu" (Life) in which the life story of the stone until it is made into an idol is described. "Arasana Kanasu" (The King's Dream) is the next poem describing the King's dream in which he is directed to construct a temple. In the fourth poem the work of the sculptor is described. Having converted the King's dream into reality, the sculptor dies. The fifth poem is devoted to extol the beauty of the idol created by the sculptor. The stone is now the image of God and also the work of art. In the sixth poem the idol, as the image of God,

attracts devotees. The seventh poem reveals the lukewarm attitude of the devotees. They neglect the idol, the object of worship, which is cast into oblivion. In the eighth poem the idol finds its freedom—freedom from worship—as a stone-breaker comes and breaks it to get the treasure supposed to be hidden in it. The "Koneya Hāḍu (The Concluding Song) in the *Mūrti* volume of poetry is in the form of an epilogue with the message that harmony alone is life.

The poem "*Jōgi*" (The Ascetic) attempts to understand the mystery of life. According to Bendre, the poem has its origin in the enchantment of the natural setting around Dharwar and the experience of the soul in all its doubts and terrors. That the person in distress in the poem is a lady is revealed from her own utterance in respect of her feelings: "A Cuckoo perched on the mango tree calls me as he would call his mate." The poem is in the form a monologue spoken by the lady. The "Jōgi" is mentioned in her narration and does not directly appear before us. The poem is perhaps given the title "Jōgi", since he is all important for rescuing the lady from her misadventure and temptations in life.

"*Jōgi*" with its symbolism is one of the most difficult poems of Bendre. The first five stanzas deal with the distressed soul surrounded by doubts and terror. The next five stanzas (6 to 10) contain images of desire and sensuous experience of the tempted soul. The last part of the poem (stanzas 11 and 12) is addressed to the Jōgi who arrives and consoles the lady, the subject of the poem, and inspires in her confidence and hope.

From the analysis of the poem we find the various stages the lady passes from the stage of doubt to the stage of realisation. The poem begins with the fearful atmosphere in which the lady is caught :

At the end of the town
The three roads end.
The valley begins where
The rivers flow and
The thieving cattle graze ;

Passers by mistake entering
The Valley lose their way ;
A pair of Owls hoot taking
Broad day for dark night.

On entering the valley is found the cemetery, the symbol of Death and to the right side of it is the pond with its green mantle symbolic of sensuousness. The temple of Kāḷi, the screeching bats, jack fruits and honey—these are also imagery for desire. The cobra in the ant-hill and the mango tree with tempting fruits symbolise the dangers of temptation. The lady in the poem caught in passion and desire does not find a way out and seeks a saviour :

There the leathery bats scream
In daylight full pigeons in
Groups fly in and out;
The nectar creeper entwines
The bitter neem tree;
Banyan sheds its milk, while
The peepul waves its leaves.

The fig tree bears her red fruit
At her trunk like the Jack tree;
Eyes long for the dripping honey;
In the corner of the grove
Somehow a mango tree has grown ;
Under it in the ant-hill where
The seven hooded cobra dwells.

A Cuckoo perch'd on the
Mango tree calls me
As he would call his mate;
He calls me persistently
Like the factory whistle untired.

At this stage the Jōgi arrives whom the lady entreats to save her from the situation. She asks him whether it is safe for her to meet the Cuckoo :

You have come Jōgi ! Welcome;
You have come at the right time.
With the divine *Name* you gave me
On my lips came the Cuckoo's call,
I hear nothing but the call around :

In the final stanza we find the troubled mind of the lady finding peace in the presence of the Jōgi. With her rhetorical question, her monologue brings the poem to a close:

Ah ! the true, the cuckoo, his call,
And his pain—Why ? What
Makes him cry persistently ?
The hills are tired of
Echoing his persistent notes,
Now, after the sweating heat
Sunshine smooths, the air,
Is full of hopes and promises.

"Saṇṇa Sōmavāra" (Holy Monday) is one of Bendre's best poems illustrating the transformation of *bhāva* (concept) into *anubhāva* (experience). The poem narrates the poet's recollection at the age of seventy his boyhood experiences. It opens with the description of Sōmēśwara temple with its beautiful surroundings. The poet recollects his visits to the temple on every Monday during the Śrāvaṇa month :

Play all the way
And sight of water.
Garden of green Goddess
All through the way;
Bank on one side,
Water on the other ;
In between the way tanks,
Around the tanks
The enchanting crops.

The poet brings into his mind's eye his boyish plays and eating of food brought from home and the visit to the temple:

The holy Liṅga in the
Shrine appears as
In a dream,
While with folded hands
His holy name is utter'd.

The permanence of Creation is brought in the poem by symbolic references to the temple, prayer groups, the river Śâlmalā near Sōmēśhwara, which taking the name Gaṅgāvaḷi falls into the ocean near Gōkarṇa. Bendre personifies the river in the following lines:

Śālmali the little girl
On her ears the leafy rings
Hiding under bushy forest
Takes the name Gaṅgāvaḷi,
Flows towards Gōkarṇa
To embrace the sea.

While offering prayers to God Sōmēśwara, the boy Bendre experiences the divine feeling as if the God holding his hand blesses him. Bendre's religious fervour is indicated in his utterance:

The Holy Monday hath come
It's time to see Someśvara.

On Patriotism and Humanism

Bendre's patriotism has found expression in such poems as "Kaṇasinoḷagondu Kaṇasu" (A dream within a dream) inspired by Bankimchandra's Bengali novel *Ānandamaṭha*; "Kēḷirondu Sōjiga" (Listen to a wonder), "*Śṛaddhāñjali*" (In Memorium), "Amara Maraṇa" (Eternal Death), and "Jaya Gāndhi Mōhana" (Praise thee Mohandas Gandhi). His poem "Narabali" (Human Sacrifice) which put him in prison was directed against the atrocity of the British during India's freedom struggle. The poem is noted for its rebellious tone:

Here stand boot legged soldiers
Big and strong guards!
With victims' anger kindling the lamp,

With their tears the idol to wash ;
Offering their heads as flowers,
With tears-gas as scented smoke,
With sound of guns as bells,
The worship is offered !
Ye ! vicious devils,
Heartless ghosts
Merciless spirits
Lawless demons begone !
Why this human sacrifice
To check freedom ?
This is nothing but dreadful
worship of Kāḷi !
The dullards call it war !

Bendre has expressed his love for Karṇāṭaka, his native country, in the poem 'Nannadu ī Kannaḍa Nāḍu' (This Kannada land is mine). Karṇāṭaka had been disintegrated by the colonial rulers when they founded Hyderabad State, Maharashtra Presidency and Mysore State after the Mysore Wars. The dream of the 'Geḷayara Baḷaga' club, of which Bendre was the leading figure, was the unification of Karṇāṭaka. This poem written in 1928 expresses the aspiration of the 'Geḷayara Baḷaga' club for the re-union of Karṇāṭaka areas.

A champion of humanism, Bendre has taken seriously the study of human problems. In "Manuvina Makkaḷu" (The children of Manu) he stated that while Nature does not come in the way of human happiness, human beings themselves are responsible for their own unhappiness. The sons of Manu, according to Bendre, are the labourers who work hard to eke their livelihood. He states that unless we know the values of life, we cannot champion the cause of humanity. He declared that all mankind is one and believed in universal brotherhood. According to Bendre, the perfect man is he who overcomes the evil in him. The ugly nature of man is shown in the poem "Kuḷiyoḷagè Heṇa" (Corpse in the pit).

"Kuruḍu Kāñcāṇa" (Blind Gold) is directed against the power of money and injustice. How the moneyed class destroy the poor is depicted in the poem. Money is personified :

Burden of the Song

Blind Gold was dancing destroying
Those who fell at his feet,
Blind Gold was dancing !

The Song

1

On his legs were invisible
Ankle-bells as white as soap
Made of deliver'd woman's bones.

On his neck was the
Cold necklace made
Of children's eye-balls.

On his hand was the burning
Torch made from ocean fire
Embedded in the body of the poor.

He was crying ha ! ha !
Fatten'd by drinking mouthful
Of the tears of the poor.

On his forehead was smear'd
The ashes-the dust from the
Skin of poor wage-earners.

2

From the temple came the sound of bells,
From the mansions the sound of dancing ;
From the shops the sound of counting.

3

Blind Gold anyhow dancing,
Performing his monkey tricks
Fell face upwards. Carry
Him off on the shoulders.

The poem narrating the evils perpetrated by the wealthy may represent also black money : The symbolic poetry reveals how the rich amass wealth from the people irrespective of their

poverty, death of undernourished pregnant women and suckling babies. Gold dances over the unfortunate poor. The poem very powerful in its content is aimed at the capitalists who ruin the poor and the labouring class.

The poem "Tuttina Cila" (Bag of Food) is a satire on the vedic concept of 'Anna Brahma'—the God of food. Bendre states that men's misery results from hunger. The poem lashes at the society responsible for poverty among its members.

Erecting a tomb
For the God.
Setting fire to the
Incense of Justice,
Ringing the Knell of life
The Bag of Food
Of miserable poor
With its voice
Within and Without
Roars to wipe out the Earth

William Blake–the mystic poet–expresses similar thoughts in respect of the poor and the miserable in his poem "Chimney Sweepers."

"Bāla Karavāḷa" is another poem on poverty pointing at the fact that with the sword of life in hand, the poor have to face poverty and hunger. "Kelasavilladavara Hāḍu" (The song of the unemployed) contains severe satire on unemployment. It describes that the unemployed unable to earn their livelihood are forced to eat their own selves.

Compassion for the suffering women has found place in Bendre's poetry. "Hēṇada Hindē" (Following the funeral procession) deals with the miserable plight of a woman whose husband is dead. The corpse is free from worldly cares; people who follow the funeral cartege have their happy homes, but for the widow the only shelter is the deep pond to drown herself. Bendre laments that the woman's life is worse than a dog's life. Another poem "Puṭṭa Vidhavē" (The Child Widow)

deals with the evils of child marriages. Before the Prevention of Child Marriage Act came into force, child marriages were common in India. Even babies in the cradle were married. The poem narrates the fate of a married little girl. She bore her child when still young. Her child died and her husband too died leaving her to her fate. As the mark of widowhood her head was shaven and she was forced to wear red saree, the symbol of widowhood. She was forced to eat the frugal meal prescribed by social laws. She listened to holy scriptures—the Purāṇās— in the temple. Bendre states :

With sigh and tears
She came to the temple
To listen to the scripture ;
Dull appear'd the idol in
The temple, the priest's throat
Became stiff as in
The hangman's loop.

Bendre is kind to animals. He has keenly watched the harsh treatment of animals by people. His poem "Kari Marināyi" (Black Pup) is directed against people who treat mercilessly dumb animals. A pup shivering and drenched in the rain in the night does not find shelter from the Bhaṭṭa, who shuts his door against the poor pup. "Karaḍiya Kuṇita" (The Bear Dance) is another poem which shows the unkind treatment for performing animals. The poet moralises that men also have to dance to the tune of others, like the performing animals, to keep their homes and dependants alive.

Poet Bendre respected those who were attached to him by the bondage of friendship. Like Alexander Selkirk, the hero of Daniel Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe", cast on a deserted Island, he valued society and friendship : Alexander Selkirk (1676–1721) himself a poet states :

Society, friendship and love
Divinely bestowed on man,
Had I the wings of a dove
How soon would I taste thee again.

Bendre was very much attached to his friend Madhura Chenna, a mystic poet, whom he met for the first time in 1921. It was an everlasting friendship. Bendre's spiritual attachment to him is described in the poem "Chenna" in the *Nādalīle* volume. Masti Venkatesha Iyengar, known in Kannada literary circles as "Māsti" was an admirer of Bendre's poetry. Bendre wrote two poems "Nānu Nīnu" (I and You) and "Aṇṇa Māstiyavarigê" (To Brother Masti), expressing respect to him:

You are a single light
I'm of different hues
I'm your brother growing
You are my brother grown.

Bendre had reverence for poet Panje Mangesha Rao. In the poem "Kavi-Śiṣya" (Poet and Disciple) he has seen in Mangesha Rao the spirit of youth in old age, a spirit which brings delight like the pleasant breeze. Tirumale Rajamma, popularly known as Bharati, with her piety and learning had influence on Bendre. Bharati and her husband Tirumale Tātācārya Sharma were highly hospitable and were liked by every one. Men of letters like Bendre, Kailasam, Masti Venkatesha Iyengar and others enjoyed their friendship. Bendre was in touch with another literary giant of his time, D. V. G. (D. V. Gundappa) known for his erudition and stature. Bendre wrote an elegy on D.V.G.'s death :

Our D.V.G. is a dwija—a Brahmin ;
He left for Heaven : It's his place
What he spoke was gospel,
What caste a sage could belong ?
An Elephant majestic he was
Who could fill the void ?

Bendre has written poems on Pampa, the *Ādikavi* of Karnāṭaka belonging to the tenth century, and Muddaṇa (Nandaḷike Lakshmīnāraṇappa) the author of *Rāmāśvamēdha* (Rāmā's Horse-sacrifice) which is considered as the first work in Kannada modern prose. The poet has also paid rich tributes

to Āluru Venkaṭa Rao, the author of *Kārnāṭaka Gatavaibhava* (The Past Glory of Karnāṭaka) and the champion of the unification of disintegrated Karnāṭaka. In the poem "Ratnākara", Bendre praises poet Ratnākaravarṇi for his lucid style and descriptive power in the epic *Bharatēśa Vaibhava* relating to the Jain prince Bharatēśa.

Religious as Bendre was, he found peace in the refuge of saints and philosophers : The message "Awake, arise, stop not till the goal is reached" of Vivēkānanda appealed to Bendre. In the poem "Śri Vivēkānanda Śikhara Pragāthā" he pays tribute to the saint. His poem "Buddha" is about the renunciation and acceptance of sanyāsa by prince Gautama. Bendre writes—

> Buddha, divine Buddha :
> He alone arose when
> The world was asleep ;
> Renounced he his wife and child,
> Home and kingdom and all
> With the burning desire for the Truth.

Bendre's poem "Gurudēv" on Tagore and several poems on Mahātmā Gāndhi deserve our attention. He speaks of Tagore's dramatic and poetic talents in the poem "Gurudēv" :

> Thou art the poet who
> Gave the songs of delight
> When people by talk are depressed
> When they by work are tired.
> Gurudēv, one must be gifted
> To play like you and also
> To sing like you.

Bendre remembers the life and sacrifice of Mahātmā Gandhi in "Nūru Varuṣātu" (A century is over). He praises the Mahātma as the greatest man of this Age–the twentieth century. His visit to Aurobindo's Ashram at Pondicherry brought him peace from the turmoils of life. It is here, on the Eastern coast of South India, that Bendre wrote the poem "Beḷagu" (The

Dawn). His poem "Pādapadmakê Prārthane" (Prayer at the Divine Feet) relates to his devotion to Śri Mātā.

Bendre ranks as one of the outstanding poets of the early twentieth century, when Kannada poetry was influenced by the romanticism of the West. Traditional Campū (work in prose and poetry), Ṣaṭpadi (sex-tu-plet), Tripadi (Triplet) and other metric forms gave place to new forms. Bendre, B.M.Sri., Panje Mangesha Rāo, Kuvempu and a few others rose to fame during the early stage of Kannada modern poetry. Bendre's use of folk diction has enhanced the beauty of his poems. Like the lake poets Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats he is a Nature poet. Like Blake, the mystic poet, he has devoted himself to find the mystery of Nature and the meaning of life. Like Kuvempu, his contemporary, he reached the heights of poetic glory. He has been the recepient of Jnanapeetha Award for his contribution to literature and has been honoured with the title Padmaśrī. His name has gone into history while his works have become the gift to posterity.

NOTE

1. G. S. Amur, Dattatreya Ramachandra Bendre, New Delhi : 1994, p. 35.

3

Plays and Short Stories

Plays

Influenced by the English plays performed in Calcutta in the early part of the nineteenth century, the modern Indian theatre took its birth in Bengal with the staging of the Bengali play *Nīla-Kamal.* Very soon the Parsis of Bombay started the professional theatre by introducing the proscenium stage with painted scenes, gorgeous costume for the actors and melodious music. Attracted by the dramas staged by the Marathi and Parsee companies, Shantakavi started in 1877 his theatrical company known as "Kṛtapura (Gadag) Śrī Vīranārāyaṇa Prāsādikā-Kṛpāpōṣita Nāṭaka Maṇḍali." He wrote musical plays like *Śākuntalā* for his itinerant troupe.

Bendre was nineteen years old when Shantakavi's professional theatre had captured the hearts of the Kannada audience. Several other professional theatre groups like Halagêri Company (1913), Vāmana Rao Master's Company (1913) Dattatreya Sangeeta Nataka Mandali (1916) and other dramatic companies flourished during the early part of the twentieth century. Along with the professional theatre, the Amateur theatre came into being, for which T. P. Kailasam and Śrīranga wrote social plays. Bendre, along with his career as a poet, wrote several plays for the amateur theatre. His plays are mostly social satires and comedies. Some of them deal with the serious problems of life. He has also written plays for the children.

Like Kailasam, Bendre has intermingled Kannada and English in one of his plays *Gôl*, the title itself being in English. His popular plays are *Hosa Samsāra* (New Family), *Tirukara Piḍugu* (Menace of Beggars), *Sāyō Āṭa* (Death Game), *Haḷeya Geḷayaru* (Old Friends), *Gôl*, *Jātre* (The Carnival), *Uddhāra* (Upliftment), *Makkaḷu Aḍigemane Hokkare* (When children enter the kitchen) and others. He was an admirer of

Gaḍakari's famous Marathi play, Ēk Ca Pyāla (A single gulp). Reviewing the play, Bendre has stated that it contains evenly the humorous, the poetic and the dramatic elements. The hero of Bendre's *Gōl* is an idealist who is in quest of reality and is puzzled by the educational system and the problems of villages.

Tirukara Piḍugu has a social purpose in that it depicts the heartlessness of the learned class towards the poor and the success of some people who live by the art of begging. Theatre person, B. V. Karanth considers Bendre's play *Sāyō Āṭa* as the first absurd play in Kannada. The king in the play involves himself with the dangers of politics, speaks about justice, brings sufferings to his people and finally becomes the victim of his own political ambitions. *Jātre* has also a king for its main character. In spite of plague raging in his capital, he ignores the safety of his subjects and orders the Jātrā festival to take place. He does not listen to his doctor's words that the festival in the plague infected area would expose the people to danger. The king is interested only in the revenue from the Jātrā, which would fill his exchequer. But, when he is attacked by the fell disease, he orders every one to leave the city. The doctor is equally hard hearted, when he makes the king die without medical aid. The dialogue between the king and the doctor in the last scene evokes hilarious laughter from the audience.

King : I feel like lying in bed.

Doctor : If you lie the Jātrā also will lie flat, your Highness !

King : My head is reeling.

Doctor : That's due to your thoughts.

King : My eyes are burning.

Doctor : Your sight is sharp, Your Highness.

King : I'm thirsty.

Doctor : Don't worry. Nothing is the matter.

King : Doctor, your patience irritates me. Something is wrong with me. Examine me.

Doctor : What is the use, Your Highness. The symptoms are apparent, your listening to the report of the dead from morning is the cause of your disease.

King : What do you mean? You mean plague?

Doctor : I can't say it; Your Highness should surmise.

King : (trying to raise from his bed) Doctor, are you afraid of plague?

Doctor : I've no fear of plague : I fear for you.

King : Tell me without fear. What has happened to me?

Doctor : Plague! Plague, Your Highness!

In *Devvana Mane* (The Haunted House), the Protagonist is virtually a silent character. The stranger Prāṇācār dominates the stage to the end of the play. *Uddhāra* (Upliftment) has the social problem relating to Harijans. The characters in the play like the lawyer Kōdaṇḍa Rāya and Sparśānanda are not interested in the upliftment of the Harijans. Vigneshwara Bhatta and Rudraiah represent their castes. Siddappa, who belongs to the older generation of Harijans knows that those who champion the interests of the lower classes in the garb of social reformers have political reasons. He warns the people against the so called social reformers. Durugappa, the Harijan is selfish and at the cost of his own people wants to become a political leader. When the temple is opened for the Harijans, there is an onrush of people. Durugappa dies of snake-bite while Vighneshwara Bhatta and Rudraiah die in the stampede. The play appears to teach the moral that "the wages of sin is death."

Like the amateur plays of his time, Bendre's plays are mostly satires and humorous plays. Serious problems are dealt in *Uddhāra*, *Jātre*, *Nagéya Hogè*, *Gōl* and a few other plays. *Nagêva Hogè* is a tragedy in which innocent Bhāgīrathi commits suicide on what she hears from the idle talk of women. *Śōbhana* is a comedy based on the simple theme of marriage between Shōbhana and Hanumaṇṇa.

Bendre is a mature dramatist. According to him, the essential parts of the complete theatre are the actors, the scenery, the playwright, the director, music and the audience. He is considered as the first writer of absurd plays in Kannada, influenced by Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. In addition to his stage plays, Bendre has written eleven radio-plays. *Yaksha Yakshi*, *Uttarāyaṇa*, *Rāmanavami*, *Dāsa Kanakadāsa*, *Raṅga Viṭṭhala* come under his radio plays.

Short Stories

The short story in Kannada has its origin in the 'Navōdaya' (Neo) literary period of the early twentieth century. Keruru Vasudevachar, M. N. Kamath and Panje Mangesha Rao appear to be the earliest short story writers in Kannada. "Śrīnivāsa" (Masti Venkatesha Iyengar) is considered as having popularised the short story as a literary form in Kannada. Those who wrote short stories inspired by 'Śrīnivāsa' were Ānanda (A. Seetharam), K. Gopala Krishna Rao, Goruru Ramaswamy Iyengar and others.

Bendre's domain has been poetry, though he has handled other forms of literature, except the novel. He has written a few short stories, humorous essays and has reviewed literary works. The Volume *Nirābharaṇa Sundari* contains his personal essays, short stories and comic songs.

The canvas of the short story is smaller than the novel. While the novel has the scope for introducing many characters, plot and sub-plots, the short-story has to confine itself either with an incident, a few characters or an interesting subject. A good story begins abruptly with what it has to say and ends with an appropriate situation—whether it be a tragedy or a comedy. Tagore's short stories are known for their simple themes and attractive narration. For instance, his *Kābūliwālā* sketches the simplicity of a fruit seller from Kabul and his attachment to a child. Galsworthy's *Broken Boot*, R. L. Stevenson's *Markheim*, Washington Irving's *Rip Van Winkle* may be cited as good short stories. Early short stroy writers in

Kannada , "Śrīnivāsa" and "Ānanda" are known for the choice of matter and its presentation. A young student playing cricket with an unread letter from his wife in his pocket brings the emotions of a young lover within the few pages of Ānanda's short story *Heṇḍatiya Kāgada* (Letter from the wife). Śrīnivāsa's short stories depict human nature in all its varieties.

Bendre, a friend and admirer of 'Śrīnivāsa', did not take seriously the short story. What Bendre wrote appears to be experimental stories. His short story *Pāla Phoo !* meaning "we are no longer friends" is an attempt to write stories in 1920. The story deals with two boys whose friendship is broken for a silly reason. The story is a study of the psychology of children. In *Maṅgāṭa* (Monkey trick), the narrator is a character in the story. Bendre has shown here that a story may be built on a simple theme : The story is about a stranger in a village befriending a young boy. The narrator enters into the fantasy of the child's world, while the child sees through the narrator the adventures of life. Another story *Hirida Katti* (The Drawn Sword) narrates how Narasiṅgarāya, a heartless father forces his young daughter to marry an old man, at the point of the sword. The sword symbolises the cruel social laws imposed on women by society. In the short story *Maguvina Karê* (Call of the child), the main character is a woman belonging to a poor family, whose husband is sick. The gossip of the neighbours, domestic atmosphere and the unwanted attention of sex crazy people on her drives her to the verge of suicide ; but it is the call of the child that saves her from the tragic situation.

Bendre's short story "*Ēkākini*" (The lonely Lady) also deals with the situation in which a lady is suspected about her chastity : A single incident changes her life adversely. She asks a sanyāsi (monk) whether she would beget children. He holds her hand to predict her life. This incident has a psychological effect on her. Her husband Kēśśava Bhaṭṭa returns home from his wanderings and suspecting her loyalty deserts her. The husband had come in the guise of the sanyāsi, presumably to test her steadfast love for him.

"*Nirābharaṇa Sundari*" has for its subject, art and the artist. Padma the artist, while painting, lives in his own world of imagination. It is the world of art he lives in. "Art for Arts' sake" appears to be his motto. His wife Nāgaśrī is puzzled about the nude picture he paints. Bendre, while narrating the story, comments on Padma's art "What kind of picture is this? Clothless arms, bare breasts, uncovered belly, legs not covered by saree! She disliked her husband painting this kind of picture." When her husband explains to her the true meaning of art and the way to appreciate it, Nāgaśrī is convinced. She considers the 'Nirābharaṇa Sundari' painted by her husband as the soul of a Jain ascetic detached from the world.

"*Nāstika*" is yet another story from Bendre's pen wherein Nārāyaṇa Rāo is the subject. He is an atheist (Nāstika), who does not believe in God. "Nārāyaṇa" is the last word on his lips before he dies. Whether he became a believer at the time of death by pronouncing the name of God–Nārāyaṇa, or uttered his own name "Nārāyaṇa" is left to the reader to surmise.

The output of Bendre's short stories is small. Yet, he is a skilful story teller as can be seen from his choice of subjects, characters and interesting narration.

4

Literary Criticism and Translations

Besides poetry, short stories and plays Bendre found time to write reviews, prefaces and research articles. He has translated several works in Kannada, English and Marathi. *Sāhityada Virāṭ Svarūpa*, a voluminous work running to more than a thousand pages which was published in 1974 contains some of his reviews and speeches. His speeches are contained also in *Mātellā Jyōti* published in 1972 and *Matadharma Mattu Ādhunika Mānava* (Religion and Modern Man) published in 1979.

Literary criticism in Indian languages has been on the lines of western standards. Bendre, however, had his own idea about literary judgement. Review of books was in the hands of a few journals and very often persons lacking knowledge about the subjects were entrusted with review work. Bendre advocated impartial and constructive criticism. He considered a literary work as a piece of art. Comparing Pampa the earliest Kannada poet with Basavanna, the "Vacana" composer, Bendre held the view that the voice of Pampa is "a voice—from the cave", while that of Basavanna "rang like a bell." Bendre appears to mean by this statement that good poetry is rarely read, while religious teachings have permanent effect on mankind.

The tragic hero in Greek plays is a victim of circumstances or faces tragedy due to the wrath of Gods or by his own action. The concept of "Tragic hero" is alien to Indian drama and literature. Bendre considers it wrong to consider Duryodhana of *Mahābhārata* as a tragic hero, as some modern critics have considered, while Bheema, one of the Pandava princes, is the real hero. Evidently Bendre had in his mind Pampa's *Vikramārjuna Vijaya*, also known as "*Pampa Bhārata*" and B. M. Sri's work *Gadā Yuddha* (The Mace Fight), where Duryodhana, the rival of Bheema, appears as the tragic hero. Bendre's favourite epics were Chamarasa's *Prabhuliṅga Līlè*,

Kumaravyasa's *Karnāṭa Bhārata Kathā Mañjari* and Lakshmisha's *Jaimini Bhārata*. He considered *Jaimini Bhārata* as a romantic novel, the main story blended ingeniously with the sub-plots, with Krishna as the hero. Bendre did not agree that Kumaravyasa's epic is a half finished work as some critics think. He has accepted Sarvagna as a poet-philosopher. As a critic of modern poetry, Bendre pays tributes to B. M. Sri. as the forerunner of lyrics in Kannada. He had his own opinion about prosody, the science of versification. In the article *Kaviya Anubhava* (Poet's Experience), he has stated that the charm of poetry does not lie in prosody alone, but lies in poetic inspiration and imagination.

Bendre, with his knowledge of Kannada, English, Sanskrit and Marathi literature, has been successful in comparative criticism. It is his surmise that the three poets Kavi Paramēṣṭi, Pūjyapāda and Samantabhadra mentioned by poet Pampa belonging to the tenth century may perhaps be the same ancient poets under the list of poets mentioned by Nṛpatunga in his work *Kavirāja Mārga* (Ninth Century). Bendre's erudition is clearly visible from his literary criticism and his writings on various subjects.

Bendre has translated some Sanskrit, Marathi, Hindi, Bengali and English works into Kannada. He admits that his translations are not literal but the rendering of the original works, preserving carefully the ideas contained in them. They can be safely termed as transcreations. From Sanskrit he has translated *Mēghadūtam*, portions of *Ānandalahari*, *Amṛtānubhava* and some prayer songs. He has translated for the Sahitya Academy *Bhagnamūrti* of the famous Marathi poet Anil (A. R. Deshapande). His other translations from Marathi are portions of the writings of Jnānêshvar, Môrôpanth, Kēśava Suta, Govindāgraja and others. His translations from English into Kannada are Aurobindo's *The Indian Renaissance*, R. D. Deshapande's *A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*; some sonnets of Shakespeare, poems of Keats and Mrs. Browning and eight stories from *Chinese Life*, edited by Edward Snow.

Bendre has given its Kannada version the title *Chīnāda Bāḷu-Baduku*.

From Bengali Bendre has translated Tagore's poems in association with Nārāyaṇa Saṅgam. He has contributed poems of Tagore translated into Kannada to the Kannada Journals "*Kāvyōdyōga*" and "*Jīvana*". In association with the Hindi scholar Gurunātha Jōshi, Bendre has brought into Kannada Kabir's sayings under the title *Kabīra Vacanāvaḷi*. Commissioned by the Sahitya Academy, Bendre has translated the Kannada Novel *Śāntalā* by K V. Iyer into Marathi.

In regard to the translation of Kalidasa's *Mēghadūtam*, Bendre admits that he has rendered it in simple style so as to be understood by those who have no knowledge of Sanskrit. His translation of Kalidasa's work is similar to the translation of *Śākuntalā* by Churamari Seshagiri Rao and Shanta Kavi, the early dramatists, who simplified the play for the popular stage.

The Tribute

Bendre chose teaching as his profession. He was appointed as a teacher at the Victoria High School, Dharwar in 1918 and retired as a Kannada Professor in 1956 serving in the D. A. V. College of Shōlapur. But, he distinguished himself as a poet and has been honoured with Jnanapeetha Award, the highest honour for literary merit. A Nature poet as he is, he has captured the various moods of Nature in his poetry. 'Śrāvaṇa' is his favourite season when Nature is in bloom and the people are in festive mood. Religion played a significant part in his life. Philosophy taught him to be even in mind, whether in sorrow or in joy. He lost several of his children and his wife, but he had the strength to endure the losses. He has expressed his joys and sorrows in his poems. The love songs he wrote when happy in youth and the mournful ditties he wrote to endure the loss of his children are the two sides of his personal life. The human mortality enabled him to compose immortal verses establishing the truth once again in the saying that : "Life is not a vale of tears, but it's vale of soul-making" (Keats).

Bendre is a poet of the *Navōdaya* (Neo) period of Kannada literature. But he struck to the tradition and seldom spoke of himself as a modern poet. For sometime he wrote in the traditional metric style ; later his poems took the new form. His poetry acquires various forms. Enchanted by his poetry, Masti Venkatesha Iyengar has called him "Gāruḍiga"-a magician of words. According to Dhoolakheda, Bendre's poems are forceful as the songs of Tansen, Akbar's court singer. Dhoolakheda remembers that, when Bendre was reciting his famous poem "Gaṅgāvataraṇa," praying the Goddess Ganga to descend from the crest of Lord Shiva, rains poured in torrents.

Bendre, like Dr. Samuel Johnson, had his circle of friends and literary men. It was a treat for them to listen to his

learned talk. His sense of humour delighted people. When in a gathering he was asked by Mrs. Sakuntala Nayika whether he came by walk from a long distance, he replied, "No, my son carried me on his back." When the lady looked at him flabbergasted, he clarified his statement : "Lady, I used to take my son in my arms when he was a child ; now, he has brought me on the back of his scooter."[1]

Bendre's poems are so rhythmic that they may be set to music. Some of them are suitable for *Kōlāṭam* folk-dance, some can be sung to the tune of *Ékatārā*, a single-stringed musical instrument or to the sound of the percussion instrument *Caṇḍike*. Some poems are also fit to be sung to the beating of *Kamsāḷē*, the bronze musical discs. Bendre's poetry have basically the folk flavour and contain the pleasing notes of the folk-songs. However, we have noted that he absorbed the vedic culture and accepted western concept of poetry. The period in which he lived was influenced by western education and literature. Yet, he wrote in Kannada, when the language of the colonial rulers had stretched its tentacles on the learned class. There was a cry that Bendre's poetry cannot be easily understood. However, he admits that the path he tread was a new one, an experimental path in the field of poetry.

Bendre ranks as one among the precursors of modern Kannada poetry. His "Kuṇiyōṇu Bārā", "Gaṅgāvataraṇa," and other poems have become popular and ring in the ears of people all over Karnataka. Many of his poems are translated into other languages. His love for the country and Kannada was great. As the President of the 27th session of the Kannada Sahitya Sammelana held in Shimoga in 1943, Bendre said : "Unless our literature, culture and history are kept alive, we cannot call ourselves Kannadigas. It is one thing to be in Karnataka and another to be a Kannadiga."[2]

When Bendre breathed his last, Kuvempu in his condolence message said : "Bendre is a great poet of the Navōdaya period of Kannada literature. He inspired the people with lofty ideals through his poetry. Though his demise brings to us sorrow,

we have to console ourselves that he has lived his life fully and meaningfully. It is our duty to preserve his works and hand them on to posterity."[3] This is a worthy tribute to a great poet from another equally great poet.

NOTES

1. 'Shakunatala Nayika', Bendre Aṇṇa, "Bendre Smṛti" (ed.) p. 32.
2. D. R. Bendre, "Sāhityada Virāṭ Svarūpa', p. 8.
3. Sri Kuvempu Kambani. 'Bendre Smṛti' (ed.), Pp.42–43.

CHRONOLOGY IN RESPECT OF POET BENDRE'S LIFE

31-01-1896	Born at Dharwar, Karnataka State, India.
1913	Passed Matriculation and joined Ferguson College, Poona, for higher education.
1916—1918	Wrote earlier Poems, like 'Tuttūri', 'Kōgile' etc. Recited poems at the Fourth Karnataka Literary Conference. Joined as a Teacher at Victoria High School, Dharwar.
1919	Married Smt. Laxmi Bai at Hubli.
1920—1922	Published first collection of poems entitled 'Kṛṣṇā Kumāri'; conceived Geḷayara Gumpu (friends group).
1926	Launched a new cultural movement—the celebration of Nāḍa Habba (festival of Land).
1922—1944	Kshēmēndra, Rāma, Bhāsker, Pāṇḍuraṅga, Lalita, Vāmana, Prēma, Maṅgaḷa, Ānanda were born. Of these only the two sons Pāṇḍuraṅga and Vāmana and daughter Maṅgaḷa are surviving. Edited '*Swadharma*', '*Jaya Karnāṭaka*'.
1930	Presided over the Mysore Writers Conference.
1932	First edition of *Gari*, sentenced to imprisonment for writing 'Nara Bali' (Human Sacrifice), branding it as seditious.
1935	Passed M.A. Examination; Presided over the Poets' Meet at Bombay.
1936—1944	A span of unemployment, and tribulations. Edited *Jīvana*, a leading Kannada Journal.
26-12-1943	Presided over the prestigious 27th Kannada Literary Conference at Shimoga. Read the Paper "Sāhityada Virāṭ Svarūpa".

1944—1956	Worked as Professor of Kannada at the D. A. V. College, Sholapur.
1946	Public felicitation at Dharwar on completion of 50th year.
1956	Appointed Advisor, All India Radio, Dharwar Station.
	60th Birthday Celebration at Sholapur, Pune, Dharwar.
	Felicitation at Bangalore under the auspices of Kannada Sahitya Parishat.
1959	*Araḷu-Maraḷu* a collection of poem's—awarded Sahitya Academy (New Delhi) Prize.
1964	Felicitation at Mysore during Dasara Festivities. *Nāku Tanti* first published.
1965	*Samvāda* a Book in Marathi gets Kelkar Prize.
1966	D.Litt. conferred by the Mysore University 70th Year Celebration at Shirahatti.
17–8–1966	Death of Smt. Laxmi Bai, wife.
1968	'Padmaśri' awarded ; D.Litt. conferred by the Karnatak University.
1969	Honoured with the Fellowship of Sahitya Academy.
1972	Conferred Title 'Karnāṭaka Kula Tilaka' by Udupi Adamaru Matha ; Production of a documentary produced by State Govt.
7–4–1974	Declared the Jnānapīṭha Award.
8–11–1974	Presented the Jnānapīṭha Award at a Special Function held at New Delhi.
1976	D.Litt. conferred by the Kāśi Vidyāpīṭha, Vārāṇasi.
26–10–1981	Demise in Mumbai.

WORKS BY BENDRE

POETRY

1. Kṛṣṇākumāri
2. Gari
3. Mūrti Mattu Kāmakastūri
4. Sakhīgīta
5. Uyyāle
6. Nādalīle
7. Mēghadūta
8. Hāḍu-Pāḍu
9. Gaṅgāvataraṇa
10. Sūryapāna
11. Araḷu-Maraḷu
12. Hṛdaya Samudra
13. Muktakānta
14. Caityālaya
15. Jīvalahari
16. Namana
17. Sañcaya
18. Uttarāyaṇa
19. Mugīla Mallige
20. Yaksha-Yakshi
21. Nāku Tanti
22. Maryāde
23. Śrīmātā
24. Bā Hattara
25. Idu Nabhōvāṇi
26. Vinaya
27. Matte Śrāvaṇa Bantu
28. Olave Namma Baduku
29. Caturōkti
30. Parāki
31. Kāvya Vaikhari
32. Balabōdhe
33. Tā Lekkaṇike Tā Dauti

DRAMA

1. Gōl
2. Tirukara Piḍugu
3. Sāyō Āṭa
4. Jātre
5. Haḷeya Geṇeyaru
6. Devvana Mane
7. Nageya Hoge
8. Uddhāra
9. Mandī Madivi
10. Mandī Makkaḷu
11. Mandī Mani
12. Makkaḷu Aḍigemane Hokkare
13. Śōbhana
14. Āthara-Īthara

CRITICISM

1. Sāhitya Mattu Vimarśe
2. Sāhitya Samśōdhane
3. Vicāra Mañjari
4. Kavi Lakshmīśana Jaimini Bhāratakke Munnuḍi

5. Mahārāṣtra Sāhitya
6. Kannaḍa Sāhityadalli Nāku Nāyakaratnagaḷu
7. Kāvyōdyōga
8. Mātellā Jyōti
9. Sāhityada Virāṭ Svarūpa
10. Kumāravyāsa
11. Matadharma Mattu Ādhunika Mānava

EDITED WORKS

1. Nannadu Ī Kannaḍa Nāḍu
2. Hakki Hārutide
3. Cāndrahāsa
4. Hosagannaḍa Kāvyaśrī
5. Kanakadāsa Cātuśśatamānōtsava Samsmaraṇa Sampuṭa

TRANSLATIONS

1. Upaniṣadrahasya (Original in English by Gurudev Ranade)
2. Bhāratīya Nava Janma (Original in English by Shri Aurobindo)
3. Śrī Aravindara Yōga Āśrama Mattu Tattvōpadēśa
4. Nūrondu Kavana (from Rabindranath Tagore)
5. Kabīr Vacanāvali
6. Bhagnamūrti (Original in Marathi by A. R. Deshpande)
7. Guru Gōvind Siṅgh

WORKS IN MARATHI

1. Santa Mahantānca Pūrṇa Śambhū Viṭṭhala
2. Samvāda (Kelkar Award in 1965)
3. Viṭṭhala Sampradāya
4. Śāntalā (Original in Kannada by K. V. Iyer)

ENGLISH

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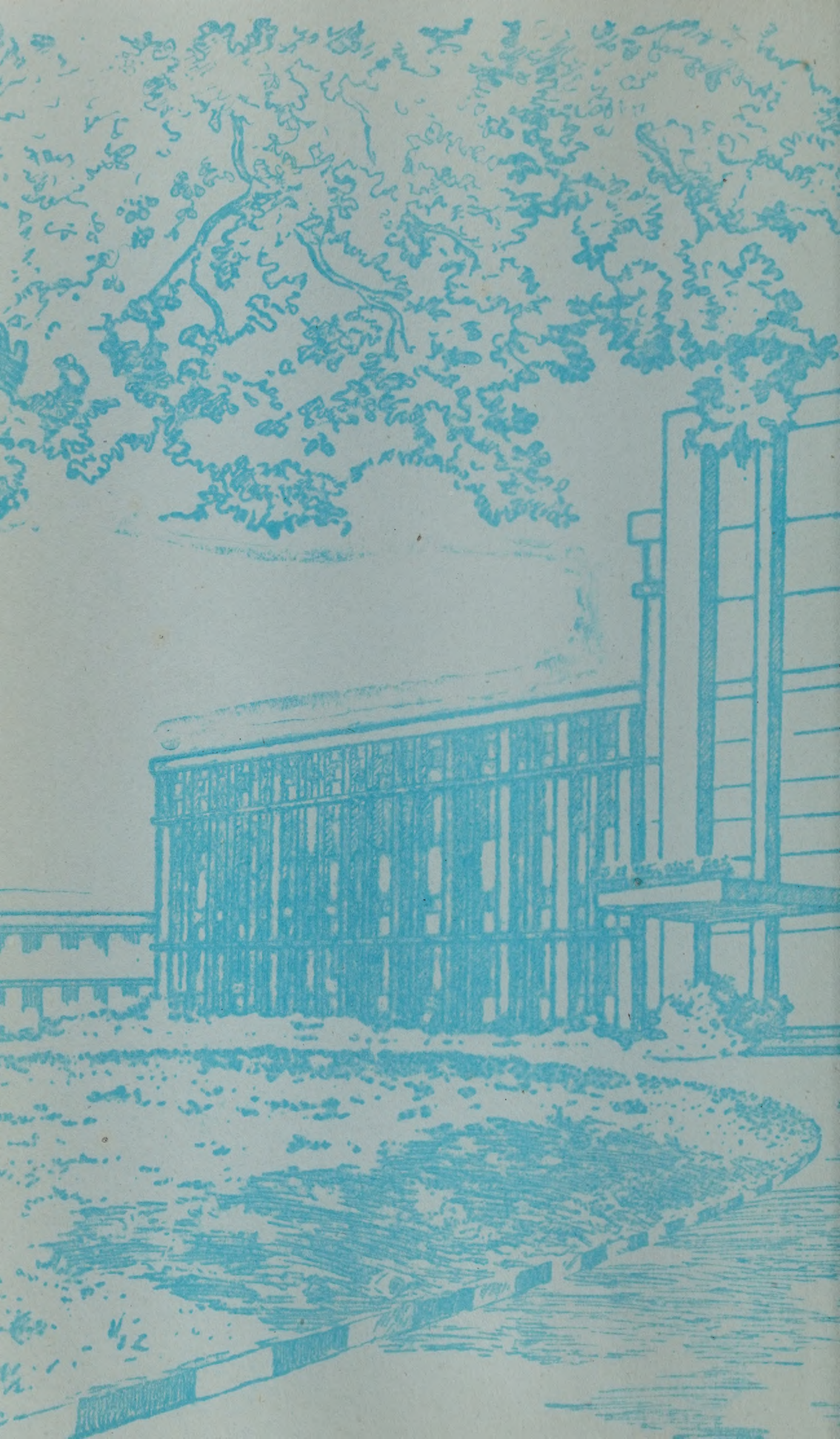

KANNADA WRITERS AND THEIR WORKS SERIES

1.	**B.M. Srikantia**	:	*S.V. Ranganna*
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6.	**Masti Venkatesa Ayyangar**	:	*L.S. Seshagiri Rao*
7.	**A.R. Krishna Shastri**	:	*Dr. K. Krishna Moorthy*
8.	**Govinda Pai**	:	*V.M. Inamdar*
9.	**Kuvempu**	:	*Prabhushankara*
10.	**D.R. Bendre**	:	*G. Krishnappa*